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SAVONAROLA AND HIS TIMES.

VOLUME II.

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THE HISTORY
OF
GIROLAMO SAVONAROLA
AND OF HIS TIMES.

BY PASQUALE VILLARI,

Professor of History in the University of Pisa.

TRANSLATED FROM THE ITALIAN

BY

LEONARD HORNER, F.R.S.

WITH THE CO-OPERATION OF THE AUTHOR.

IN TWO VOLUMES.

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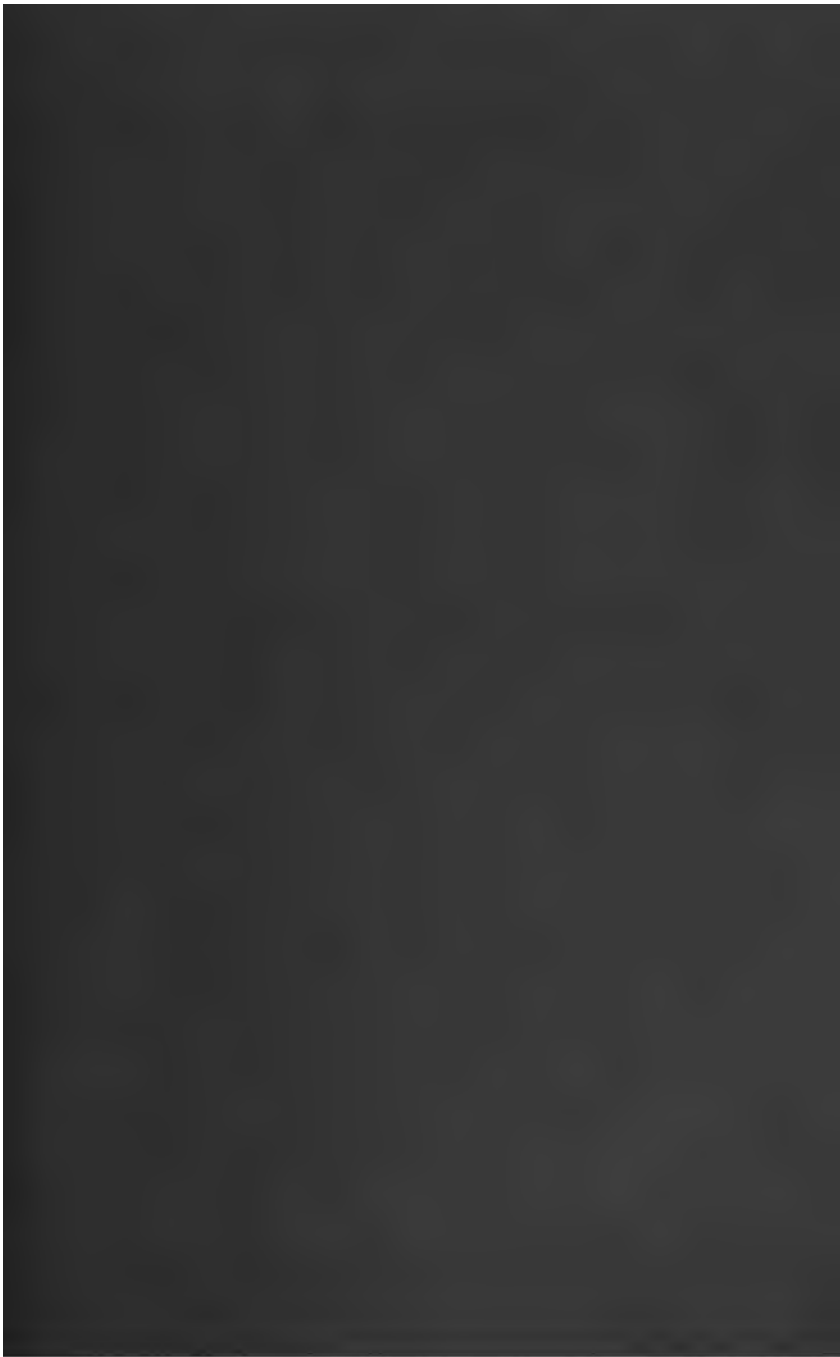
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SAVONAROLA AND HIS TIMES.

VOLUME II.

BOOK THIRD.

[1495-1497.]



CHAPTER I.

CHARLES VIII. RETURNS TO FRANCE—THE ALLIES ASSIST PIERO DE' MEDICI IN AN ATTEMPT HE MAKES TO RETURN TO FLORENCE—SAVONAROLA PREACHES AGAINST DESPOTISM AND AGAINST THE MEDICI; THEY ARE REPULSED.

[1495-1496.]

THE affairs of Italy underwent a new alteration, which caused a great change in those of the Republic and in the condition of Savonarola. In the early part of the year, France had been marvellously favoured by fortune: the King had reached Naples without having encountered any obstacle; the Aragonese had fled; and the new Government had been established, as if by magic.* But very soon everything was overturned, and as rapidly as it had risen. It was not long before the French contrived to displease both the Governments and the people of Italy. No words can sufficiently condemn their conduct towards the Florentines; they made incessant demands for money, and were always making new promises, not one of which was ever fulfilled. The Neapolitans were

* Guicciardini, Leo, Sismondi.

most indignant at their insolence, and had already begun to long for the restoration of the Aragonese. The other Governments took alarm at the power of the new army, which had victoriously traversed Italy from one end to the other; but none were so much alarmed as Ludovico the Moor, who had invoked that army to cross the Alps. That which disturbed him most was seeing that the French army had been joined by many of the inhabitants of Lombardy and of the Genoese territory, and it was with no small terror that he saw Gian Giacomo Trivulzi, his personal enemy, had become one of the principal and most favoured of Charles's generals; added to which, he was both irritated and rendered suspicious, by Charles refusing him the principality of Taranto, which was one of the terms agreed to in their treaty. He is again governed by fear, and is plotting new designs; and he who had brought the French scourge upon Italy, is now endeavouring to become the head of an Italian league to drive the barbarians away; in which project he succeeded.*

The league was signed at Venice on March 31, 1495. The parties to it being the Republic, the Emperor, and the King of Spain. Its ostensible object was to defend Christianity against the Turk; to maintain the integrity of Italy and of the allied states, and to establish an army of 34,000 cavalry and 24,000 infantry. But in reality the Sultan had been one of those who entered most warmly into the league, promising supplies both of men and money: and its true object was to drive the French out of Italy.† It was stipulated, by secret articles, that Spain should send a naval force to the assistance of King Ferdinand, to enable him to recover his kingdom; that the Venetians

* Nardi, Guicciardini, Sismondi, Leo, Comines, &c.

† Sismondi, *Hist. des Répub. Ital.*, c. 95, and the other authors above cited.

should attack the French on the side of the Adriatic; that The Moor should take possession of Asti, to prevent reinforcements to the French; and that the Emperor and the King of Spain should invade France by land on their respective frontiers. The Moor had thus succeeded in raising up armies against France on every side.* These events did not remain long unknown to Charles. His shrewd ambassador, Philip de Comines, quickly saw the true object of the league, and on the very day that it was signed, he wrote an account of it to Naples. He then made all haste to join the King, for whom he saw no hope of safety, except by leaving strong garrisons in the kingdom, and by endeavouring, with the rest of his army, to open a passage for his return to France.

In his way to Naples, the ambassador passed through Tuscany, the only Italian state which, rejecting all the offers of the allies, and disregarding all their threats, remained faithful to Charles. On arriving at Florence, Comines at once determined to go to St. Mark's: he was desirous to become personally acquainted with Savonarola, and endeavour to form a clear conception of the man who had filled all Europe with his fame. That experienced judge of men left the cell of the Friar filled with that high admiration and veneration to which he gives expression in so many parts of his memoirs. He expected to see a singular man, and found an extraordinary one. His astonishment was awakened so soon as he heard the Friar discourse on politics with so thorough a knowledge of events. 'He spoke to me of the *great meeting*† which the Venetians had brought together much better than I could have done, who had just come from it. His own life was

* Sismondi, *Hist. des Rép. Ital.*, c. 95.

† The *Grande Assemblée*—the name which Comines gives to the meeting of the Powers composing the league.

as virtuous as possible, as all might perceive. His sermons were directed against vices, and had been the means of introducing improved manners into Florence. I do not pretend to judge of his revelations; but it is most certain that he predicted things, both to myself and to the King, which no one believed at the time, but which all came to pass. As to the accusations of his enemies, that he availed himself of the confessional to learn State secrets, I can only say, that I believe him to be a good man, and that he has revealed things that no one in Florence could have told him.' So great was the faith Comines had in him, that he urgently and confidentially questioned him, whether he thought that the King would escape from the dangers with which he was then surrounded. Upon which the Friar, in a solemn tone, recapitulated the King's violation of fidelity; his promises unfulfilled; his disobedience to the commands of God; and the abandonment of the great work of reform in Italy and the Church. 'These new dangers,' he thus concluded, 'are the precursors of a much greater punishment with which the King will be scourged, unless he become obedient to the Lord, and enter upon a good course of life. For the present he will have much to contend against; but he will at last come out victorious.' Immediately after this most remarkable interview, Comines proceeded on his journey to the kingdom of Naples.*

* We will here give some extracts from those parts of his memoirs in which Comines speaks of Savonarola, because his authority as a foreigner and a contemporary, as a man of much acuteness, and as having had a personal acquaintance with the Friar, is entitled to much weight. 'J'ay dit en quelque endroit de ceste matière d'Italie, comme 'il y avoit un frère prescheur, renommé de fort sainte vie... appelé frère Hieronyme, qui a dit beaucoup de choses avant qu'elles fussent advenues, comme j'ay dit cy dessus, et tousiours avait soustenu que le roy passeroit les monts... et disoit que le roy estoit esceu de Dieu pour réformer l'Eglise par force, et chastier les tyrans... Sa vie estoit la plus belle du monde ainsi qu'il se pouvoit voir, et ses sermons pres-

The King, in the meantime, had quitted Naples on

'choient contre les vices, et a reduit en icelle cité maintes gens à bien vivre, comme j'ay dit...' Referring to what some had said against his prophecies, that he had represented as revelations things which he had recently learned from the citizens, Comines observes: 'Je ne les veux point accuser ni excuser... mais il a dit maintes choses vrayes que ceux de Florence n'eussent scieu luy avoir dictes; mais touchant le roy et les maux qu'il dit luy devoir advenir, luy est advenu ce que vous voyez; qui sont, premier, la mort de son fils, puis la sienne, et ay veu des lettres qu'il escrivoit au dict Seigneur.'—Comines, *Mémoires*, liv. viii. c. 19. We will give another extract which is important, in as much as it refers to the conversation the author had with Savonarola: —'J'ay oublié à dire, que moy estant arrivé à Florence, allant au devant du roy, allay visiter un frère prescheur, appelé frère Hieronyme, demeurant à un couvent réformé; homme de sainte vie, comme on disoit, qui quinze ans avoit demeuré au dit lieu; et estoit avec moy un maistre d'hostel du roy, appelé Jean François, sage homme. La cause de l'aller veoir, fut par ce qu'il avoit tousiours presché en grande faveur du roy, et sa parole avoit gardé les Florentins de tourner contre nous; car jamais prescheur n'eut tant de crédit en cité. Il avoit tousiours asseuré la venue du roy (quelque chose qu'on dist ne qu'on escrivist au contraire); *disant qu'il estoit envoyé de Dieu pour chastier les tyrans d'Italie*, et que rien ne pouvoit résister ne se defendre contre lui. Avoit dit aussi qu'il viendrait à Pise et qu'il y entreroit, et que ce jour mourroit l'estat de Florence; et ainsi, advint, car Pierre de Medicis fut chassé ce jour. Et maintes autres choses avoit preschées avant qu'elles advinssent, comme la mort de Laurent de Medicis; et aussi disoit publiquement l'avoir par révélation, *et preschoit que l'estat de l'Eglise seroit réformé à l'espee. Cela n'est pas encore advenu, mais il en fut bien près, et encore le maintient.* Plusieurs le blasmoient de ce qu'il disoit que Dieu luy avoit révélé, autres y ajustèrent foy: de ma part je le répute bon homme. Aussi luy demandoy si le roy pourroit passer sans peril de sa personne, veu la grande assemblée que faisoient les Venitiens, de la quelle il scavoit mieux parler que moy qui en venoy. Il me respondit qu'il auroit affaire en chemin, mais que l'honneur luy demeureroit, et n'eust il que cent hommes en sa compagnie; et que Dieu qui l'avoit conduit au venir, le conduiroit encore à son retour: *mais pour ne s'estre bien acquitté à la réformation de l'Eglise, comme il devoit, et pour avoir souffert que ses gens pillassent et desrobassent ainsi le peuple, aussi bien ceux de son parti et que lui ouvrieroient portes sans contrainte, comme les ennemis; que Dieu avoit donné une sentence contre luy, et brief auroit un coup de fouet.* Mais que je luy disse, que s'il vouloit avoir pitié du peuple, et délibérer en soy de garder ses gens de mal faire, et les punir quand ils le feroient, comme son office le requiert, que Dieu révoqueroit sa sentence ou la diminueroit; et qu'il ne pensast point estre excusé pour dire, je ne fay nul mal. Et me dist que luy mesme iroit au devant du roy et lui diroit; et ainsi le feit, et parla de la restitution des places des Florentins. Il me cheut en pensée la mort de mon seigneur le Dauphin, quand il parla de cette sentence de Dieu, car je ne voyois autre chose que le Roy peut prendre à cœur; et dis encore cecy afin que mieux on entende que *tout ce dit voyage fut vray mystère de Dieu.*'—Liv. vii. c. 11.

the 20th of May, leaving behind him strong garrisons in different parts of the kingdom, and taking with him the rest of his army, under the command of Trivulzi, to enable him to force a passage for his return to France. He entered Rome on the 1st of June, desirous of having an interview with the Pope; but his Holiness had left the city the day before, in the direction of Orvieto. Alexander Borgia had much reason to fear the indignation of the French. He had first invited them into Italy; and, on receiving a bribe from the Aragon, had turned against them; on fortune becoming favourable, he again went over to them; and was now not only again their enemy, but had been one of the principal authors of the league. Added to this, there was a strange piece of history, very characteristic of those times and of Borgia. During the first passage of the French through Rome, they found there, as a prisoner, Prince Gemme, the brother of the Grand Sultan Bajazet. He was a youth in appearance and disposition thoroughly oriental, full of ardour, which had procured him many partisans, and led him thereby to entertain hopes of success in a contest with his brother for the throne. Forced by adverse fortune to take refuge in the island of Rhodes, he had been taken prisoner by the Grand Master of the Order, and delivered up to Pope Innocent VIII., on whose death he fell into the hands of Borgia, who made him an object of traffic. The Sultan, greatly fearing the consequences of his brother obtaining his freedom, paid the Pope 20,000 ducats annually for his maintenance, and, on more than one occasion, had offered to give 200,000 if he would put him to death. When the French arrived in Rome, the first thing the King asked from the Pope was, that Gemme should be given up to him, in order that he might turn him to account in the war he contemplated against the Sultan. Alexander,

although much against his will, thought it necessary to comply with the demand of the King, who also required that the Pope's son, Cæsar Borgia, (afterwards Duke of Valentino,) should accompany the French camp, in the quality and with the honour of an ambassador: but, in reality, that he might be an hostage for the good faith of his father, who was so little to be depended upon. On a sudden, however, Cæsar escaped from the camp, and immediately after Gemme most unexpectedly died. Some said that he had been poisoned by the Pope, before he was given up to the King; others that he had directed his son to poison him. Be that as it may, the fact is certain, that the Sultan immediately sent the 200,000 ducats, together with the seamless coat of Christ. But his envoys were taken prisoners and robbed near Sinigaglia by Giovanni della Rovere. Such were the times, and such the men! *

Notwithstanding all these causes for resentment, Charles could not then think of revenge, nor remain at Rome, but proceeded forward, and on the 13th of June entered Siena. It is hardly credible to what an extent this news inflamed the people of Florence, and how hateful to them the King had now become. The Republic had continued firm in its alliance, but could not forgive his violated faith, his failing to fulfil the stipulated terms of the treaty, and his having assisted the Pisans in their revolt. All that he had done was to demand more money, continually promising to restore the fortresses, and to make the Pisans submit, but performing neither. For these reasons, the Florentines, in spite of all their efforts, were getting into a worse and worse condition. They had sent the élite of their

* Nardi, *Storia di Firenze*, ediz. Arbib., 1842, vol. i. p. 75; Guicciardini, *Storia d'Italia*, ediz. Rosini, vol. i. p. 129; Giovio, Sismondi, *Hist. des Répub. Italien.*, c. 94; *Histoire des Français*, tom. xv.; Michelet, *Renaissance*.

youth to Pisa to fight under the command of Piero Capponi, and had taken Hercules Bentivoglio and other generals into their pay. But the Pisans had obtained reinforcements from Genoa, Siena, Milan, and even from Charles himself. When the Florentine ambassadors reminded him of the promises he had made, he only answered—‘But what could I do when your Signori spread discontent among all who are subject to them?’ He even then sent the Pisans 600 of his Swiss and Gascon infantry, who proved of the greatest service to them during the war.* The rebellion thus met with encouragement in all parts of the Florentine territory, and on the 26th of May the town of Montepulciano surrendered to the Sienese, who forthwith sent there a strong garrison. Such was the state of matters when Charles was approaching the city, and, as if all other things had not been sufficient cause for their anger, he had brought Piero de’ Medici along with him.

No sooner had the intelligence reached the city than all instantly flew to arms. The historian Nardi relates that it was quite wonderful to see in how short a time men and boys had armed themselves, and how private citizens vied with the commissaries of the Signory in filling the city with provisions and arms. In a marvellously brief space of time, eleven thousand cuirassed infantry poured in from the surrounding villages; citizens had collected their friends and servants in their houses, stones were carried up to the towers, the gates were provided with bars, many of the streets were barricaded, and the Gonfalonieri of the companies paraded the city during the night, to see that not a

* Sismondi, *Hist. des Répub. Ital.*; Michelet, *Renaissance*; Leo, Guicciardini, Nardi, &c. The French historians are not less severe than the Italians in condemning the conduct of Charles towards the Florentine Republic.

single foreign soldier should enter. And all this provision was made by those same Piagnoni whom the Arrabbiati designated as fit for nothing better than to mutter Ave Marias. They did not, it is true, neglect their religious duties; they attended public worship, gave alms, and carried in solemn procession the *Madonna dell' Impruneta*; and those who were most devoted to these observances were the most ready to take up arms. Savonarola, who had not interrupted his sermons on the Psalms on the festival days, thus called upon his hearers from the pulpit:—‘Be earnest in prayer, but do not neglect human means: you must help yourselves in all manner of ways, and then the Lord will be with you. Take courage, my brethren, and, above all things, be united. If you be steadfastly united and have one common will, although the whole world were against you, the victory would be ours. Let nothing frighten you, for we are yet only at the beginning of the game. You will find that you live in terrible times, and will see enemies on every side of you: you will hear it said, There they are from Rome; from this place and that; and now they are in our own city. Unhappy Florence! unhappy Italy! Let then union be among you, the union of the Lord, for victory cannot fail ultimately to be on the side of the good.’*

Meanwhile, the first ambassadors who were sent by the Republic to Charles met only with rude replies. When they asked by what route he meant to pass, in order that he might be supplied with provisions, he answered, ‘Supply your whole territory.’ He was in great indignation that Florence should have taken up arms, and placed everything in a state of defence, as if an enemy were approaching. On the other hand, when the ambassadors saw Piero de’ Medici in the camp, and doubting whether the King might not intend to

* The eighteenth Sermon on the Psalms.

reestablish him in Florence, they made use of expressions more bold than prudent, for the rage of the King was increased by them, and unless some man of great authority and firmness could be found to interpose, there was no hope of an amicable settlement. All with one assent turned to Savonarola. He alone had ventured formerly to address the King in firm and commanding language, at the same time without giving him offence; he was looked up to by Charles almost with veneration, who had been in frequent communication with him by letters, the subjects of which were well known to every one. One of the Friar's letters, which his enemies had obtained possession of, was published by them, in order to excite the anger of the league against him, the effect of which, however, was greatly to increase the love the people bore him, for it was in nearly the following terms:—‘Most Christian Sire, it is the Lord's will that the Florentines shall continue in alliance with your majesty, but it also is his will, that, while under your protection, their liberties shall be fully respected, and that they shall not be subjected to the authority of any one individual citizen; for the goodness of God has determined that tyranny shall everywhere be overthrown. The Lord will visit with a terrible punishment any private citizens who shall evince a desire to usurp power in this flourishing Republic, as has happened before now; because this new and popular Government and settlement of public affairs has been the work of God, and not of man; and because He has made of this a chosen city, and it is His will that it be magnified and filled by His servants; and whoever touches it, touches the pupil of His eye. Therefore, Sire, if you will not show obedience, and do not fulfil your promises to the Florentines, and do not restore their fortresses to them, great will be the adversity that will come upon you, and the people will rise

in rebellion against you.* What other man could, what other man ought to have presented himself before the King, to rescue the Republic from so imminent a danger, unless it was he who knew that he might venture to make use of language such as this?

Charles and Savonarola met at Poggibonsi, and the Friar, in a prophetic and commanding tone of voice, repeated that which he had already addressed to the King in writing. He reminded him that he was now returning home as a fugitive; that the new dangers to which he was exposed were precisely those against which he had warned him when in Florence, and which he had repeated to him in his letters—‘Most Christian Prince,’ he said, ‘you have provoked the anger of the Lord by having been faithless to the Florentines, by having neglected that reform of the Church that the Lord had, through me, so frequently brought before you, and for which he had by so many signs shown that he had selected you. You may escape from these present dangers, but if you do not take up the work you have neglected, if you be not

* The letter was dated May 26, 1495 (Appendix F.), and was published, but with many mistakes and alterations, so that Savonarola himself expressed his regret respecting them in a sermon he preached on the following July 28. ‘The letter which I wrote to the King of France was printed without my knowledge, and contains many mistakes.’ An exact copy of it is in the Riccardi library, cod. 2053. The better to show how widely spread and believed was the idea that the expedition of Charles VIII. was predestined by God, we will give here an extract from an oration addressed by Marsilio Ficino to that King:—‘Veri namque simile est, Christianissimum Gallorum regem a Christo mitti, et Carolum, præ cæteris insignem pietate regem, christianâ pietate duci; præsertim cum iter opusque tantum eâ mente sis aggressus, ut sanctam Jerusalem sævissimis barbaris occupatam, summo humani generis Redemptori denique redimas... Benedictus qui venit in nomine Domini, Carolus charus nobis, excelsus, rex pacificus. Hæc est dies quam fecit Dominus, exultemus et lætemur in eâ...’ And Ficino went on in this strain with greater and greater exaggeration of praise: which in the mouth of such a man is deserving of great reprehension; and, coming from one who says of himself that he owed his existence to the Medici, it excites our contempt. See *Oratio Marsilii Ficini ad Carolum Magnum Gallorum regem. Ficini Opera*, Basilea, vol. ii. p. 960.

obedient to the commands of the Lord, now once more communicated to you by me, His unworthy servant, I now warn you, that the anger of God will visit you with far greater misfortunes, and you will be replaced by another.*

The King appeared almost terrified by these words, and, without loss of time, he was on his way to Pisa, having requested Savonarola to accompany him. This, however, the Friar declined, after having spoken to him a second time at Castel Fiorentino, for he wished to go back, that he might not fall into the hands of the enemies of Florence. On the 21st of June he announced from the pulpit that, for the present, the danger had blown over, and he then took the opportunity of impressing upon them anew the importance of prayer, of a good life, of union, and of a popular Government.

The King entered Pisa in triumph. The principal citizens threw open their houses to him, the ladies took off their jewels, presenting them to him and his barons; and, in strong contrast to what he had met with in Florence, the Pisans endeavoured to gain him over to their side by satisfying his love of money. When, by these signs of devotion to him, he appeared to be favourably disposed towards them, one day, as he was

* All the biographers, and Nardi in his *Storia di Firenze*, mention this interview. Comines also speaks of it (liv. vii. c. 2), and describes on several occasions the substance of the letters and discourses addressed to the King by Savonarola. We should hardly escape the censure of our readers, if we did not give them the words of a writer of so great authority, one now a-days not much read among us.—See liv. vii. c. 19:—‘ Il a publiquement presché que le roy retourneroit de rechef en Italie, pour accomplir ceste commission que Dieu luy avoit donnée, qui estoit de réformer l'Eglise à l'espée, de chasser les tyrans d'Italie, et qu'au cas qu'il ne le feist, Dieu le puniroit cruellement; et tous les sermons premiers et ceux de présent, il les a fait imprimer, et se vendent. Cette menace qu'il faisoit au roy, luy a plusieurs fois écrite le dicte Hieronyme, peu de temps avant son trespas; et aussi le me dist de sa bouche Hieronyme, quand je parlai a luy (qui fut en Italie), en me disant que la sentence estoit contre le roy au ciel, en cas qu'il n'accomplist ce que Dieu luy avoit ordonné...’—Comines, *Memoires*.

coming from mass, a company of the most beautiful women of the city presented themselves before him, dressed in mourning, with dishevelled hair, barefooted, and with halters round their necks in sign of a hated servitude, loudly beseeching him to restore them to freedom. The people, who accompanied them, in great numbers, joined in that prayer, and both the King and his generals appeared to be moved by the scene. A council was held with the barons, and, for a time, serious thoughts were entertained of supporting the Pisans: but these were very soon given up by the King, like all his other engagements. The Pisans were not restored to freedom, the fortresses were not surrendered to the Florentines; not one of the promises he had made to Savonarola were fulfilled, and he and his whole army set forward on their march by way of Lucca and Pontremoli. At Fornovo, on the river Taro, he came up with the allied army; he had 9,000 men, the allies many more; a battle ensued on the 6th of July, and which side was victorious was disputed. So far is certain, that the King wished to pass, and did pass; and that his opponents wished to prevent him, and failed. Charles halted at Asti, and again abandoned himself to pleasures, returning slowly to France. Ferdinand of Aragon made his entry into Naples on the 7th of July, and re-established the Government which had been displaced; nothing of the enemy remained except the few garrisons which had not surrendered; they were scattered over the kingdom, and had received neither relief nor instructions. Thus, in less than one year, the French had twice traversed the whole of Italy, conquering, and again losing their conquests with the same ease; discontenting equally friends and foes, and leaving no other remembrance of them than that of their avarice and bad faith.*

* Guicciardini, Nardi, Cerretani, Parenti, Comines, Sismondi, Leo, Michelet.

Their conduct to Florence continued unaltered. Whether it was that the general who held the fortress of Pisa had received secret orders different from those which the King had made public; or, as some asserted, that he was in love with a young Pisan lady, it is certain that he not only never surrendered the fortress, but that he fired upon and killed several of the Florentines, who, in an engagement with the Pisans, had pushed forward within a short distance of the Porta di San Marco. Such conduct led to frequent remonstrances on the part of the Republic, from which new ambassadors and fresh supplies of money were sent to the King, with promises also to assist his troops who were scattered over the kingdom of Naples. In the month of September, their ambassador, Nicolo Alamanni, returned from France, bringing express orders from the King to his generals and troops to surrender the fortresses, and quit the service of the Pisans: but so far were they from being obeyed, that on the following January, the French sold to the Pisans their own fortress for 14,000 florins, making them pay 10,000 more for the artillery they had left. The fortresses of Sarzana and Sarzanello they sold to the Genoese for 20,000 florins; that of Pietra Santa to the Lucchese for 30,000; and all that the Florentines obtained was to have the fortress of Leghorn restored to them.*

* See the authors quoted above. How deeply the Florentines felt the injuries that had been inflicted on them by the French, may be seen by the following passage in the *Ricordi Storici del Rinuccini*: 'On January 2, 1495 (Florentine style), news was received in Florence that a French Castellan, who held the new citadel for that barbarous traitor and assassin Charles VIII., unworthily King of France, had surrendered and consigned the said citadel to the citizens of Pisa, who were then under a free government; although he had on many occasions promised to restore it, with oaths and interchange of deeds sworn to on the sacred stone on the altar of Santa Maria del Fiore, and by means of holding out more hopes, had contrived to obtain for himself and his homicidal ministers more than 300,000 florins from us, never dreaming of his dishonour and perfidy, a degree of treachery one has never heard of, except in its resemblance to that told of Gano di Maganza, and he, at least, was not a king.'

But notwithstanding all these enormities, the departure of the French from Italy had seriously increased the unfavourable condition of the Republic. The allies being now at liberty, and secure from any danger, could freely prosecute their designs against it. They had a mortal hatred of the new Government, and wished to punish it for having remained faithful to France, and for having refused to join the league, the object of which they had declared to be, to free Italy of the barbarians. The danger had, therefore, become imminent, and the only hope that Florence could have of getting rid of enemies so powerful, was a want of agreement in the allied powers. The Pope and the Venetians wished for the restoration of Piero de' Medici, but The Moor, although pretending to give his consent, had a personal hatred for Piero, and a secret understanding with the Arrabbiati; moreover encouraging a distant hope that he might one day be able to extend his power over the Republic. It was, however, decided that Piero should, in the meantime, be stimulated to collect men and money, and attempt to get back to Florence. He, as it may easily be supposed, acceded most willingly, and although both ruined in fortune and credit, he contrived, by dint of much exertion, to get together 10,000 ducats, which he made over to Virginio Orsini, in order to enable him again to embody his old soldiers. Orsini, in the battle on the Taro, had ignominiously fled from the French camp, and he eagerly availed himself of this opportunity to repair his injured military reputation. While Piero and Orsini were to advance upon Florence, Giovanni Bentivoglio, who had been taken into the pay of the Venetians and of The Moor, was to make an inroad on the Republic from the side of Bologna; Caterina Sforza, lord of Imola and Forli, was sent with his forces to make an attack on another quarter of the Florentine frontier, and hopes were held out

of powerful aid from Siena and Perugia; thus everything seemed to augur favourably for Piero's success. But when the day for action arrived, affairs took a different turn. Piero and Orsini advanced by short day's marches to the frontiers of the Republic, always expecting the promised assistance, which, however, never arrived; and thus they lost much time and money to little purpose.

While things were thus progressing slowly in the Medicean camp, the citizens of Florence, encouraged by Savonarola, exhibited the greatest energy. The Friar had for some time ceased to preach, on account of the increased ill-humour against him at Rome, of which we shall give a full account in the following chapter. But before leaving the pulpit, he foretold great dangers which threatened the city, and which had brought about the passing of the law abolishing Parlamenti, which was to be the protection of their liberty. The danger he had announced having occurred, added greatly to his reputation; and, in defiance of the prohibition to preach which he had received, he mounted the pulpit, on the 11th of October, to inspire the citizens with fresh courage, and excite them to come forth in defence of their country. He began each sermon with religious topics: 'The life of man, my brethren, is a constant warfare on this earth, and the chief military service is that of a true Christian; for he must fight against every obstacle opposed to the Spirit. He has to fight against the world, the flesh, and the devil; and thus his warfare never ceases. So it was with the apostles and martyrs, and will always be with good Christians. Such is the will of God, that they may have glory in the life to come. Marvel not, therefore, if in announcing to you future events, we meet with such contradictions. It is wonderful to me that greater have not yet been encountered. And as we must go

‘ forth to battle, let us take the field to recruit such of
 ‘ our ranks as have got into disorder, and prepare them
 ‘ for the new war. Two things are also desired ; the
 ‘ one, to continue the combat so long as we have life ;
 ‘ the other, to conquer ; for the cause of Christ must be
 ‘ victorious. Cast aside every doubt that the victory in
 ‘ the end will be ours ; and were I to die, you would be-
 ‘ hold the hydra of the poet ; for one head being cut
 ‘ off, seven others would start forth.’ After continuing
 some time in this strain, he turned from religion to po-
 litics, and began to speak ironically of those who
 declaimed against the new Government. ‘ Magnificent
 ‘ Signori, when you have any difficult question be-
 ‘ fore you, I wish that you would summon one of
 ‘ those babblers, and say to him, “ Well, then, what
 ‘ have you to say concerning this matter ? ” And if he
 ‘ is able to make any reply, I would consent to lose
 ‘ my cloak. You would find that he would not know
 ‘ what answer to make, or would say something foolish.
 ‘ Present him, then, with a handful of millet, and
 ‘ tell him to go feed the chickens, and leave matters
 ‘ of State alone.’

After a little more of this burlesque, he entered upon
 the grave and serious questions of the day, and his lan-
 guage then became something fearful. He would have
 no half measures while the country was in danger. In
 the church and from the pulpit, holding up his crucifix,
 he openly, and with a loud voice, advised that any
 one who should propose the re-establishment of a des-
 potism in Florence should be put to death ; and that who-
 ever would bring back the Medici should be dealt with
 as the Romans did with those who desired to bring back
 Tarquinius. ‘ Wilt thou, who art not willing to pay
 ‘ respect to Christ, have respect for private citizens ?
 ‘ Execute justice, I say to you ; *Cut off his head !—be*
 ‘ *he the chief of any family whatsoever—cut off his*

‘*head!* Forget not the law made against Parlamenti ;
‘ teach it to your sons ; let it be written up everywhere.
‘ Place confidence nowhere but in the Consiglio Mag-
‘ gioro, which is the work of God, and not of man ;
‘ and whosoever would change it, whosoever would es-
‘ tablish a tyrant, whosoever would place the government
‘ in the hands of a few, may he be eternally accursed
‘ by the Lord.’ He then inculcated the necessity of
courage and resolution in making the necessary pre-
parations, because he who expects Divine aid, without
doing all in his own power, is guilty of tempting his
Lord. He repeated these admonitions on the 15th and
25th of the same month ; and so soon as he felt assured
that the people had recovered their courage, he obeyed
the prohibition to preach which had been imposed
upon him by the circumstances we shall presently
narrate.

It was not long before the effect of these addresses be-
came evident. Four days after the first of the sermons, a
provision was adopted, which, while it re-enacted the re-
wards for the seizure and putting to death of the Medici,
was almost a general call to arms. It ran nearly as fol-
lows : ‘ Piero de’ Medici having, by his tyrannical conduct,
‘ made many attempts against the liberty of Florence, and
‘ having been declared a rebel by a sentence of the
‘ Otto della Balìa, he, according to law, may be put to
‘ death by anyone with impunity. And inasmuch as
‘ he continues in the like evil mind, by exciting
‘ against this city, not only many barons of Rome,
‘ but the Supreme Pontiff, and almost all the other
‘ potentates of Italy — hoping, by their aid, to become
‘ master of your liberty, to seize upon your revenues,
‘ to do violence to your women and children, and to
‘ return to that despotic course of life, with which
‘ he and his ancestors have for so long a time afflicted
‘ your city — the said Signori Otto di Guardia e Balìa

‘have decreed, that whoever shall kill the said Piero ‘de’ Medici shall receive a reward of 4,000 gold ‘florins of full value.’* A short time afterwards, a reward of 2,000 florins was offered for the head of Giuliano de’ Medici, † and commissioners were appointed to seize all their property for the benefit of the Republic. ‡

But that was not enough; nor did the Florentine people stop here. The sermons of Savonarola had also led the Arrabbiati and the Piagnoni to take up arms; for the Medici were equally hateful to both, and the near approach of Piero created indignation and fear in the one as well as in the other. The war against Pisa was immediately suspended, leaving there only 2,000 infantry and 300 men-at-arms. A thousand infantry and 3,000 men-at-arms were posted near Cortona to meet the enemy, who seemed to be advancing on that side. At the same time, a camp of 1,500 infantry and 300 men-at-arms were sent to the frontiers of the Sienese territory, to prevent a junction with the Medici. Piero was thus surrounded on every side. He and his army were waiting quietly, between Tavernelle and Panicale, the promised reinforcements, which never appeared; and by this state of suspense, his funds were exhausted, and his army melted away; even Virginio Orsini left him. Piero now found himself alone, with a few troops, with his enterprise an entire failure; reaping nothing from it but losses and disgrace, and receiving the final blow to his already ruined fortune. He sought safety in flight, lamenting the broken faith and vain promises of the allies, and returned to Rome, to seek rest in that court, or among his friends.§ The

* *Archivio delle Riformazioni, Provvisione del 15 Ottobre, 1495.*

† *Ibidem, Provvisione del 26 Novembre, 1495.*

‡ *Ibidem, Provvisione del 16 Dicembre, 1495.*

§ Nardi, Guicciardini, Ammirato, Parenti, Cerretani, Sismondi, Leo, &c.

Florentines, rejoicing in their escape from the threatened danger, sent back the troops to Pisa, and became more and more suspicious of the league, which had assumed the designation of 'Italian,' the better to enable them to oppress the Republic.

CHAPTER II.

SAVONAROLA INVITED TO ROME IN A BRIEF FROM THE POPE :
HIS ANSWER—BY A NEW BRIEF HE IS SUSPENDED FROM
PREACHING ; BUT THE DIECI OBTAIN FROM THE POPE A RE-
CALL OF THE BRIEF — A CARDINAL'S HAT IS OFFERED TO
SAVONAROLA, WHICH HE REFUSES.

[1495-1496.]

THE attempt of Piero de' Medici had failed, be-
cause of the hatred entertained against him by
the Arrabbiati and the Frateschi (the followers of the
Frate Savonarola); but if the allies had been really
in earnest in their offer of assistance, the city of
Florence could not easily have resisted so great a
force ; the failure of the enterprise must therefore
be attributed to want of agreement in the league.
The Moor had not forgotten the injuries he had received
from Piero, and notwithstanding his repeated profes-
sions of friendship, or rather of submission, he did not
wish to have him restored to power in Florence. On
the contrary, he leaned to the Arrabbiati, who had suc-
ceeded in rousing his anger against Savonarola, giving
him to understand that the Friar had him specially in
view, or rather had actually named him, in his denun-
ciations of the vices of the Italian princes, and in his
descriptions of a despot. He had, therefore, for some
time, been united with them to accomplish the ruin of the
Friar.* The Arrabbiati were thus enabled to accomplish

* Pitti in his *Storia di Firenze* says :—‘ As the enemies of Savona-
rola became alarmed, they were more than ever submissive to the Duke

their object of opposing the popular Government, without appearing to do so, and The Moor, in persecuting the Friar, whom he already disliked, made friends in Florence, and thus cherished the hope that he might one day establish a footing there.

The Venetians saw with displeasure those secret intrigues and schemes of The Moor, and continued favourable to Piero, but they alone were really sincere in their desire for his restoration. The Pope was very cool in the cause, his chief object being to enlarge the territories of his sons; real sympathy for any human being was not in his nature, and he even longed to lay his covetous hands on the Florentine Republic. It was, therefore, no difficult matter for the Arrabbiati and The Moor to persuade him to engage with them in the sanguinary war they contemplated against Savonarola; and when they had once kindled anger in a mind so tenacious of hate, their design advanced to its accomplishment with sufficient rapidity.

Alexander had, at first, no particular cause for hatred of Savonarola; but, when, from the early part of the year 1495, letters began to reach him from Florence and Milan, representing the Friar as an audacious accuser of the clergy and of the Holy Father;

‘of Milan, who hoped by their aid to restrict the power of the State; and from the year 1495, on their entreaty, and through the medium of his brother, who was a Cardinal, he had obtained briefs from Rome, interdicting the Friar from preaching.’—See *Archivio Storico*, vol. i. p. 50. Nardi very frequently speaks of the designs of the Arrabbiati. He says at p. 88, in the first volume of his history:—‘Many of the principal citizens continually showed themselves to be far from being satisfied with this form of Government, dissembling, however, their true reason (as we have already said) for their discontent, they dexterously opposed the before-mentioned Friar Girolamo, as being the chief support of it, by getting the Pope, by means of some citizens and certain religious persons, to have him cited to appear in Rome,’ &c.—Guicciardini, in his *Storia d’Italia*, says nearly the same thing. But a letter of Savonarola to The Moor, and those of the spies employed by the latter, show more clearly that the persecution of the Friar was far more on political than on religious grounds.

when his terms, in themselves sufficiently daring, were laid before him, altered, exaggerated, and falsified; when he was told that the Prior of St. Mark's was the sole support of the popular party, the sole author of all the hatred for the Medici, Alexander was excited to a state of ferocity. Cardinal Ascanio Sforza, the brother of The Moor, who had been the chief tool in the election of Borgia, was the person who most effectually managed the plots, and skilfully fanned the flame, as yet scarcely kindled. There was at Rome another of the fiercest persecutors of Savonarola, the Preacher Frà Mariano Gennazzano, who had never forgiven his humiliating defeat in Florence. He was one of the most active in the conspiracy in favour of the Medici and against Savonarola. He brought forward all sorts of calumnious accusations, calling him the tool of the devil; and, pretending to know his secret designs, he represented him as the author of numerous plots against the Pope himself.*

Borgia at length began operations with a degree of cunning quite worthy of his character. On July 25, 1495, he addressed a letter to Savonarola full of blandness:—‘Much beloved Son,’ he said to him, ‘health and apostolical benediction. We hear, that among all the labourers in the vineyard of the Lord, you show the most zeal: this greatly delights us, and we give praise for it unto Almighty God. We have heard how that you affirm, that what you have said of future events does not proceed from yourself, but from God; and we are therefore desirous, as, indeed, it is the duty of our pastoral office, to discourse with you, in order that we may, through your mediation, know better what is pleasing to God, and practise the same. Therefore we exhort you, that, in all holy obedience, you come to

* We shall hereafter have occasion to point out minutely the plots of this same Gennazzano.

‘us without delay, who will receive you with love and
‘with charity.’*

The artifice of this brief was the more refined, inasmuch as it appeared to place reliance upon the well-known good faith of the Friar. But the character of the holy father was too notorious, and the plots of the Arrabbiati were equally so, in Florence; for they had already tried to put Savonarola to death, both by attempts at assassination and by poison, and they openly boasted of their friendly terms with Rome; so that no one could avoid seeing the object of an invitation so strangely benignant. It was clear that it was intended either to murder the Friar by the way, or, should that fail, to leave him to perish in the dungeons of the Castle of St. Angelo.† His friends, therefore, entreated him not to move from Florence, where his presence was more than ever necessary; the departure of the French having given rise to new perils for the popular Government. It was a difficult case for Savonarola to decide upon; it was a question either of disobedience to the summons of the Pope, or of exposing himself to be made a victim of the Arrabbiati, who wished, by killing him, to put an end to the Republic. Fortunately, however, a very legitimate excuse occurred for his not leaving Florence. He had scarcely been cured of a severe internal complaint, of which, in the opinion of the physicians, he might have a relapse; and they added that unless he suspended his studies and his sermons he would be in danger of his life. He had already, some days be-

* Perrens has given this brief and Savonarola's answer, but most incorrectly and with several omissions. We have restored them to their true reading, by the help of the best MS. See Appendix G. and H.

† As was afterwards done by Pope Clement VII. to Benedetto da Foiano, a friar of St. Mark's, who during the siege of Florence (1527-1530), in preaching the doctrines of Savonarola, had encouraged the people to rise in defence of their liberties. Having gone to Rome, he was starved to death in an underground dungeon of the Castle of St. Angelo.

fore, made a communication to the people to that effect, telling them that his malady made it necessary for him to suspend his preaching. His state of exhaustion was visible to everyone who beheld him, and saw the difficulty he had in going up the steps of the pulpit. But it is equally true, that no sooner did he find himself in the presence of the people, and had begun to speak, than he seemed all of a sudden to recover his strength, and to be even more bold and powerful than ever. All this, however, was a momentary effort, a kind of fictitious excitement, the effect of which was soon felt, and it laid him up for several days in a state of prostration. He then determined to give over preaching entirely, and, at the same time, to lay before the Pope the just and valid reasons which obliged him to postpone his departure for some time. But, before carrying his resolution into effect, he wished to take leave of the people, and to give them that advice which the existing state of things rendered necessary. He foresaw the dangers with which the Republic was threatened; and he was anxious to put them on their guard, not only against the Arrabbiati, but against the Medici, who were the more dangerous, from being no longer objects of fear.

On July 28 he delivered one of his tremendous discourses. The Signory, and all the other magistrates, were that day present in the Duomo, and Savonarola mounted the pulpit in a very depressed state of mind. He had come to take leave of the people at a moment when the departure of King Charles, and the abandonment of his plighted faith, had placed the Republic in new dangers; at a moment when his enemies were stirring up that war which was to begin the ruin of the Republic by his own, and when they had dexterously succeeded in making the Pope a powerful instrument in their party rage. As their object was to attack the Republic

through him, he saw very clearly, that, in defending himself, he was defending the whole people. Therefore, although he mounted the pulpit with difficulty, no sooner was he in the presence of the people, and saw the earnest attention of such a multitude, than he became animated, as if by a sudden gift of the Spirit.

He took for his subject the corrupt habits and the scandals that had long been prevalent in Florence. Gamesters, blasphemers, women of bad fame, and persons addicted to vices which decency forbids us to name, infested the city, and had become more audacious in proportion as the Friar was persecuted, and would increase now that he was obliged to remain silent. Savonarola did not on that day treat them with any mercy; he recommended that they should be severely punished, even with death, if they could not otherwise be put a stop to. He brought forward the story of Achan, saying how the Lord had on his account been so incensed against the Hebrew people, that he could in no way be appeased except by the death of the guilty. ‘Behold then, Florence, you who would be so merciful, behold what God has ordered: and are ye wiser than God? are ye more merciful than God? are ye greater than God—ye? O Florence, you wish to show more mercy than God, but your clemency is madness, your pity is cruelty; execute justice, I say, on that horrible vice. I tell you that Almighty God requires justice; you must arise and lay hold of one of these, lead him before the judge and say—This man is deserving of death. If you do not this, you will place yourselves and your city in danger. Give up your balls and your gaming, shut up your taverns. I tell you, Florence, that this is a time for lamentation and not for festivity.’ All this was, however, no more than a menace, for the purpose of creating alarm among the people; for he never laid aside the moderation of

his nature, although he often allowed himself to be carried beyond it in the vehemence of his words.

He then proceeded to discourse on prophecy, and held it to be necessary for the salvation of the people and of the Church—‘which, in the present day, is in desolation, by the corruption of those who are at its head, and by the absence of good preachers. A truly good preacher should be ready to give up his life for the truth, and to purchase the salvation of his flock; but where now shall we find such preachers? I tell you, that if matters continue thus, the Church will be continually falling into a greater state of ruin, and there will be no repose for Italy. I have long since told you, O ye clergy, that it is you who have raised this tempest.’

After this, he changed his subject, and turned to political questions—‘I have inculcated upon you four things: the fear of God, peace, the common weal, a reform of the Government; the last of which was the Consiglio Maggiore; and what I have now to say is in confirmation of those things.’ Then submitting them one by one to examination, he enforced them by new arguments. He recommended union as above everything else in importance, and said he should be glad if commissioners of peace were appointed, who might do away with the party names of Bigi, Bianchi, and Arrabbiati, which were the ruin of the city. He strongly advised that a hall should be built for the Consiglio Maggiore, and that, if required, the workmen employed in the Duomo should be engaged on it, that the work might be more acceptable to the Lord. ‘Stand firm by the Consiglio, improve it, correct whatever defects it may have, for it will be the sole hope, the sole strength of the people.’ It was at this time, and especially on this occasion, that Savonarola proposed that a law should be passed to abolish Parlamenti, of which we have already given an account; and in uttering

denunciations on those who were always calling out for them, and would not be persuaded that the Consiglio had become the chief power, and ought to be so, he could hardly find threats or punishments strong enough; for he knew full well that a Parlamento was the weapon which the Arrabbiati, and especially the Medici, would speedily make use of, in order to change the form of the Government. After he had thus persuaded the people to fortify themselves against the new dangers, he gave them some short admonitions on other matters, and hastened to conclude. He recommended the Signory not to be continually spending their time on small things, as was too much the custom in Florence, but to direct their whole attention to matters of importance, and leave the rest to the other magistrates. He urged the necessity of their doing all in their power to encourage industry, and how beneficial it would be to remit the taxes on the silk and woollen manufactures. He then took leave in the following words: ‘My people, when I am in this pulpit I always feel myself to be in a sound state, and if, when I leave it, I could continue to feel as I do when I am here, I should continue strong. But when I shall go down from this place, I believe that I shall have to attend to my own health, and on that account it will be some little time before I see you again, as I must try to get cured of my complaint. If I live, I shall resume my preaching. I believe that I shall have to rest for a month, unless your prayers should call me back sooner. During my absence, Frà Domenico will preach. I shall certainly return if I am alive. But the welfare of Florence will in all respects be looked to. The wicked may labour in their vocation, that the seed they have sown may fructify, for such is the will of God. I could at this moment inform you who are the authors of your dangers, but I do not wish to

harm anyone, and you will know them when they are punished. I must now conclude, for I have preached so much, and am so exhausted, that I have shortened my life by many years, and am reduced to great weakness. Well then, Friar, what reward do you wish to receive? I wish for martyrdom; I am willing to undergo it; I pray for it daily to thee, O Lord, for the love I bear unto this city.*

After he had delivered that sermon, he immediately sent an answer to the Pope. This reply, which he sent on the last day of July, is remarkable for its decorous humility, and, at the same time, its noble frankness. He said that the first duty of a religious man is to show obedience to his superiors; but that he begs leave to bring forward some of those justifiable excuses which stand in the way of that submission; quoting, as an example, what Pope Alexander IV. had said to the Bishop of Ravenna. He then continued as follows: † ‘Most Blessed Father!—There is nothing I more ardently desire than to cross the threshold of the apostles Peter and Paul, that I may adore there the relics of so many saints; and most willingly would I have come, now that the Holy Father has deigned to call to him his humble servant. But I have hardly recovered from a very serious illness, which has made it necessary for me to give up both preaching and study, and which still keeps my life in danger.

‘I consider myself under a stronger obligation to obey than the mere words of the command would require, because of the benign intention they express. While the Lord, through my instrumentality, has delivered this city from a vast effusion of blood, and has brought it under good and holy laws,‡ there are still

* *Prediche Sopra i Salmi*. The Sermon on the Psalms, which he preached July 28

† See Appendix H.

‡ ‘Quum civitatem a non mediocri sanguinis effusione et a multis aliis

many enemies, internal as well as external, who desire to bring it into servitude, and, under an entire delusion, are thirsting after my blood, and have many times made attempts on my life, by assassination and poison. On that account, I could not move from hence without manifest danger; and even in the city itself, I cannot venture abroad without an armed escort. Moreover, the new reform which the Lord, through me, has introduced into Florence, has not yet taken firm root, and, without it has continual help, is evidently in danger; therefore, it is the opinion of good and wise citizens, that my going away would cause the greatest injury to the city, while it could be attended with little benefit.* I cannot suppose that my superior can wish for the ruin of an entire city: I hope, therefore, that your Holiness will benignantly forgive this postponement, in order that the reform, which it has pleased the Lord to begin, may be brought to perfection, and for the benefit of which, I feel assured, He has caused those impediments to my departure.†

‘Should it be the desire of your Holiness to have greater certitude of these things I have publicly foretold of the scourge which is coming upon Italy, and of the renovation of the Church, it will be found in a book I have just published (*Compendium Revelationum*). I was anxious that my predictions should be printed, in order that if they should not come true, it may be clear to all the world that I am a false prophet. Those things which are of a more hidden nature, and must still remain shut up, I cannot as yet reveal to mortal man.

‘noxiis, meâ operâ, Dominus liberaverit, et ad concordiam legesque sanctas revocaverit, infesti facti sunt mihi, tam in civitate quam extrâ, iniqui homines.’

* ‘Discessus meus maximæ jacturæ huic populo, et modicæ isthic utilitatis foret.’

† ‘Dum hoc ceptum perficiatur opus cuius gratiâ hæc impedimenta, ne proficiscar, nutu divino accidisse, equidem certus sum.’

‘ I beseech your Holiness, therefore, to be pleased to
 ‘ accept these excuses, which are evidently true, and
 ‘ to believe that it is my most ardent desire to go to
 ‘ Rome; and, so soon as my strength will enable me,
 ‘ my wishes will spur me on.’*

The Pope made no answer to this letter, but gave Savonarola fully to understand that he admitted his excuses.† The Friar kept himself in retirement at St. Mark’s, attending to his health, and only delivering some discourses to his brother monks. Frà Domenico of Pescia preached for him in the Duomo, and endeavoured to follow out his doctrines, and to imitate the style and manner of his master’s delivery;‡ but he had neither originality nor energy in his eloquence; nevertheless, the people went willingly to hear him, as he was much esteemed for his sincerity and good faith; and everyone knew that he spoke under the direction of Savonarola.

While matters were thus going on tranquilly and peacefully, a new and unexpected brief arrived from Rome, dated September 8, addressed to the friars of Santa Croce (the Holy Cross), who were on no friendly terms with those of St. Mark. It spoke of Savonarola as *a certain friar Girolamo*, a disseminator of false doctrine; and, in very threatening terms, intimated to him, that he must come to Rome.§ Whence could this change, this

* See Appendix H.

† In a sermon he preached February 18, 1498, Savonarola gave an account of the briefs which had come to him from Rome. On that occasion, referring to his answer, he said: ‘ He (the Pope) received the excuses very graciously.’—See pp. 20—22, ed. Venezia, 1540.

‡ One of his sermons is to be found at the end of those of Savonarola on the Psalms, and is dated September 29.

§ ‘ And then, some time afterwards, that is about six weeks, the ‘ former being dated about the end of July, there came another brief, ‘ written on September 8, or thereabouts, full of abuse, in which there ‘ were not less than eighteen mistakes. The first of these was, ‘ that it was addressed to the monastery of Santa Croce, although ‘ intended for St. Mark’s. That it spoke of *Quemdam Hieronymum Savonarolam*, that is a certain Girolamo Savonarola, as if I was not well ‘ known; and six weeks had not yet elapsed since they had addressed

sudden anger, have arisen, after having accepted his excuses? Why address to Santa Croce a letter that was meant for St. Mark's, and add fuel to that flame of discord which was known to exist between monks of different orders?*

It was indeed an inextricable mystery, and no other reason could be assigned for such a proceeding, except, perhaps, a desire on the part of the Pope to injure Savonarola in the eyes of the people, and excite hatred against him in other religious communities. Very soon, however, the true cause of this urgency to bring him to Rome became apparent. The dangers which Savonarola had predicted in the last sermon he delivered in July, had all been verified; and the attempt made by Piero de' Medici, which the course we have adopted in our history obliged us to narrate in the preceding chapter, sufficiently justified his having inveighed so strongly against Parlamenti. Savonarola, therefore, in place of going to Rome, again mounted the pulpit in October, and delivered those three sermons, in which we have seen him encouraging the people to rise in defence of their country: when the whole city flew to arms, when the Medicean camp was broken up, and when the attempt of Piero proved, as we have narrated, an entire failure. It may thus easily be imagined why the Pope, when he saw the extraordinary effect his sermons had produced, became so enraged against the Friar. He therefore, at the beginning of Nov. fulminated a fourth brief,†

'me so affectionately. There were many other trifling errors, which, in honour, I do not now mention; so that you see that the Pope must have been misled when such a change in his briefs could have taken place in so short a time.'—Sermon of February 18, 1498.

* Those of Santa Croce belong to the Franciscan Order.—*Tr.*

† 'There then came another brief, saying that I had disseminated doctrines calculated to create dissension among a peaceful people, and many other false things, and on that account suspending me from preaching.'—Sermon of February 18, 1498. This brief has not been found, but its having been sent is demonstrated not only by Savonarola's own words, but also by the silence he observed during the following months, and by the letters of the Florentine magistrates to the ambassador in Rome.

in which he suspended Savonarola altogether from preaching. Silence being thus again imposed upon him, he had no other course left but to obey. He had not, in fact, preached since the Advent of 1495; and Frà Domenico continued to take his place in the Duomo.

During these months of silence, and at the same time of infirm health, he was greatly agitated. He found himself compelled to enter into a contest with Rome, to defend his doctrines against charges evidently calumnious, and to defend his own life against snares laid for him by party hatred; while thus occupied with self-defence, he was obliged to give over thinking of that political reform which was progressing so favourably, and that reform of manners which had already been attended with such happy results. His enemies desired nothing better. The charges of heresy, of his being a disseminator of scandal, of seducing the people, and so forth, were not believed even by those who made them. We shall see very clearly that the Pope found nothing to condemn in his doctrine; it was entirely a political war, in which his Holiness had joined the Arrabbiati and The Moor, hoping that, by extinguishing the Friar, they should break up his party. So long as the struggle had the outward appearance of its true nature, namely, a political struggle, Savonarola had always maintained a serene, lofty demeanour; but now that the ground had been changed, and it was slyly attempted to conceal the political object by a religious accusation, he was sensible of the grave and perilous difficulty in which he was placed. If it had really been a question of dogma, he could have submitted it to the authority of the Church; but the Pope had only denounced him, in general terms, as a disseminator of false doctrines, and imposed silence upon him. The choice before him was either to abandon the people, by obeying the command of one who had no other object in view

than to destroy the Florentine liberty, or to bring his case before the public, and so spread scandal and discord in the Church. He was sadly grieved; but he did not hesitate for a moment to refrain from preaching, expecting that the magistrates and cardinals who were friendly to him would try to bring Borgia into a milder state of mind. It is clear, from letters which Savonarola wrote at this time, that he had firmly resolved not to resume his sermons without having first obtained permission from Rome.

But if he remained silent, it was not because he had any doubt of the justice of his cause, and he did not believe that commands could be valid which were issued for a political object, and were founded on the false and calumnious information of his enemies. He the rather began at this time to give greater consistency to an idea that had been passing in his mind, of another way by which the evils that afflicted the Church might be arrested. There prevailed at this time among many good and earnest Catholics an opinion that the election of Borgia, having been carried by the most barefaced simony, was null and void, and that the only way to remedy the many scandals of which he had been the author, was to assemble a council for the purpose of deposing him. The chief mover in this was the warlike Cardinal of San Pietro in Vincola, afterwards Pope Julius II. :* he called Borgia an infidel and heretic,

* Padre Marchese, *Storia di San Marco*, p. 225 and following; Raynald, 'Julianus Robureus, Card. S. Petri ad Vincula, in Gallias aufugit, iram Alexandri veritus, cum celebrandum concilium œcumenicum diceret, nimirum ad erigendam Ecclesiam a simoniacis conculcatam.' The same Cardinal, when he became Pope, issued, January 14, 1505, a bull, which he caused to be confirmed by the Lateran Council, in which the election of Alexander was declared to be null, and could not be considered to have acquired any validity by the subsequent homage of the cardinals. See Padre Marchese, p. 226, Note 1. That author observes on the subject: 'that after so long and uninterrupted an approval of the Church, such an opinion cannot be accepted by Catholics, but if it were to close the way of Cardinal della Rovere to the Papacy, it could not open that of martyrdom to Savonarola.'

and was constantly near Charles VIII., urging him to assemble a Council for the reform of the Church. Nor did the King appear to be particularly averse to this proposal; and Comines, his ambassador, several times observes, 'this question of reform was very near being brought forward.'* On the first occasion of the French passing through Rome, not less than eighteen cardinals, together with him of San Pietro in Vincola, were closeted with Charles, earnestly beseeching him to bring about the desired reform; and cannons were twice planted against the Castle of St. Angelo, to seize Alexander and force him to call a Council;† but, as usual, the King became more doubtful in proportion as they thought themselves nearer a resolution; and he yielded to the councils of Brissonnet, who had acquired great influence over his mind, and who had received many favours and sums of money from the Pope.

Among those who were anxious for a Council and a reform, Savonarola was certainly one of the most eager, and he only sometimes hesitated to push the matter from the fear of bringing scandal on the Church, in which the prevalence of union was of all things most prized by him; but the conduct of the Pope put an end to all hesitation. He knew besides that he had a powerful supporter in the Cardinal of San Pietro in Vincola;‡ but although, from prudential motives, he had abstained from alluding to such matters in the pulpit, he had not neglected to urge the subject on King Charles by frequent letters, which were now more numerous and stringent.

* 'Preschoit que l'estat de l'Eglise seroit reformé à l'espée. Cela n'est pas encore advenu, mais il en fut bien près, et encore le maintient.'—Comines, *Mémoires*, &c., viii. c. ii.

† Marchese, p. 227; Guicciardini, lib. i. c. 4; Rainaldo, ad an. 1495, note 1.

‡ It appears from the trial of Savonarola, that the Cardinal had sometimes sent him words of encouragement, stimulating him to proceed.

Three letters which we have found directed to the King *post admissionem regni Neapolitani** were written during these months, and lead to the belief that there must have been more. Savonarola always speaks in them as a prophet of the Lord. 'Remember,' he says to the King, 'that I had many times announced your coming into Italy, when no one else was thinking of it; I foretold your success and your dangers. The Lord has punished you because, in disobedience to his commands, you abandoned his work. But more grievous still will be your punishments if you do not turn into the right path. I, as a messenger of God, give you notice, that if you do not change your conduct, if you do not fulfil the promises to which you have sworn, if you do not that which, through me, you are commanded to do, the Lord will recall 'the choice he made of you to be his minister for 'that duty, and will appoint another.' It so happened that just at this time the Dauphin of France died,† to the very great grief of the King; and the event convinced him more than ever of the truth of that which Savonarola had prophesied. But even this was not sufficient to free him from that everlasting state of irresolution by which he seemed to be destined to make everyone discontented with his conduct.

Meanwhile the Friar persevered in his silence, occupying himself with study and writing letters to his family, who were then oppressed by poverty and domestic misfortunes. These letters show that he had that warm affection for his parents which we always find in truly great men to be firm and unalterable. He affectionately urged upon his brothers that they should help one another; and with regard to himself, he said that

* These letters, hitherto quite unknown, have no dates; we found them in the Riccardian library. See Appendix I.

† Charles Roland died on October 10, 1495, when three years old.

having renounced the world, words of comfort were all that he had in his power to give; but that he participated in all their joys and sorrows.* He wrote a letter to his mother, who had just lost his brother Borso, in which the warmth of his feelings for her is most tenderly expressed: he loved her more than any other object on earth, and she was the confidant of his inmost thoughts. This letter is most remarkable, not only for the tender feelings with which it abounds, but because it shows us that the affection he bore his mother is identical with that which he so earnestly inculcated from the pulpit on the excited multitude. The ideas, the very words, are the same: he is ever full of his high and prophetic mission; he even discourses to his mother on the importance of a good life, on the vanity of worldly things, and concludes with telling her that his death is near at hand. 'I would that your faith were so strong that you might be like that most holy Hebrew woman in the Old Testament, and look with dry eyes upon your son's suffering martyrdom before your face. My dearest mother, I do not say this from any desire to lessen your comfort, but that if it ever should happen that I must suffer death, you may be prepared for it.†

During this interval, his health began to improve, and the necessity for some active occupation was again awakened in full force. What could he do? To return to the pulpit without full permission from Rome he could not think of; and, in directing the sermons of Frà Domenico, he could not expect the same great

* See among the letters published by Padre Marchese, that to his brother Albert, dated October 28, 1495.—See Appendix K.

† We found this letter in the Magliabechian library, and Padre Marchese, in publishing it in the Appendix to the *Archivio Storico*, No. 26, makes the following remark:—'If time and men's indifference were to allow all the other writings of Savonarola to disappear, this letter would be a standing proof of the deep and sincere piety of his soul.'—See Appendix L.

results that had attended his own. But Savonarola was not a man to be long without finding out some means of doing good; and if he could not effect much, he was contented with little. The carnival of 1496 was near at hand; and the Arrabbiati, now that the Friar was reduced to silence, were preparing to celebrate it as in the days of the Medici: by giving full scope to their unbridled passions, by indulging in the obscene amusements that had for some time been put a stop to; and this the Friar prepared to prevent. The undertaking, however, was not so easy as at first sight it might be thought to be. The Florentines had always taken great delight in the carnival festivities; and when the Medici came into power, they gave themselves up to a degree of unrestrained indulgence scarcely credible; the whole city in those days was one scene of orgies; everyone abandoned himself to drinking and gluttony; public decency was entirely forgotten. By Savonarola's preaching, a considerable change had taken place; but certain habits during the carnival time were so deeply rooted, that neither new doctrines, nor new laws, nor magistrates, nor the most severe prohibitions, could altogether do away with them. As was most natural, it was the children who were most strongly attached to these enjoyments. It had been customary for them to stop people in the street, blocking up the way with long poles until they received money, which they spent in the evening in foolish banquetings. After these, they lighted bonfires in the piazze, dancing and singing around them, and finished with a game of throwing stones, by which, every year, some one was killed in the streets. This silly and brutal amusement was many times prohibited, and the most severe threats were held out; but all in vain. The most prudent citizens, the Otto, and the Signory themselves, made every effort without success: in the evenings, the children were in such

a state of excitement from the uproar during the day, that no kind of punishment inspired any terror. At last resort was had to Savonarola. Having, in the preceding years, accomplished a political reform, and a reform in manners, and as the change of circumstances in which he was placed prevented him from pursuing matters of graver moment, he imagined that he might carry this third, and more modest attempt, which he called *the children's reform*. He perfectly well understood that it would be very difficult to do away entirely with ancient customs: he therefore determined to give them a new direction, and to substitute religious for carnival-eschian amusements. In all the places where the children were in the habit of assembling, to collect money for their suppers, he had small altars set up, before which children were placed to ask for money; but, instead of spending it in feasting, it was to be given to the poor. He told them that they were to sing; but in place of indecent songs, they were taught hymns and sacred lauds. He himself set to work to compose some of these, returning to poetical compositions for many years neglected; and some he got the poet Girolamo Benivieni to write. In order that all might be proceeded with in an orderly manner, he employed Frà Domenico to collect the children, and make them choose from among themselves certain leaders, some of whom were presented to the Signory, to whom the object and plans of the reform were explained. These being approved of, the children, elated by the importance they had acquired, willingly set to work. It is very true that, during that carnival, the city was not in a very quiet state, nor could people walk through the streets with entire freedom; but the importunity of the children was nothing new, although the charitable purposes to which Savonarola had directed it were quite a novelty. Thus, in 1496, the game of the stones was, for the first

time, given up, as well as the wasteful suppers; and 300 ducats were collected for distribution among the poor. On the last day of the carnival there was a solemn procession, which the whole people, attracted by the novelty of the scene, came out to witness. The children walked in procession singing hymns, and visited the principal churches of the city, after which they deposited the money they had collected in the hands of the Buoni Uomini di San Martino, to be given to the *poveri vergognosi* (the poor ashamed to beg).* Some objected to all this, as they were in the habit of objecting to every good work that emanated from the Friar; but the majority of the citizens, and all well-disposed people, admitted that the Friar had known how to accomplish that in which everyone in Florence before had failed.†

In the meanwhile the Dieci della Guerra, who, under

* This carnival procession, first introduced by Savonarola, is not mentioned by any of his biographers, but is minutely described by the Chancellor Paolo de Sementiis, in an account he gave of it to The Moor, by whom he had been sent to Florence, to look after the affairs respecting Savonarola. He says that the number of children amounted to 10,000.

† Burlamacchi, p. 104 and following, gives a full account of these games, and of the reform of the children, and Nardi, speaking of them, observes:—‘Among other things which appear deserving of notice is this; that at that time there was a voluntary cessation of that stupid and brutal custom, the game of the stones, which used to take place at the time of the carnival, a custom so firmly established by ancient usage, that even the most severe prohibitions of the magistrates had not been able to repress it, far less eradicate it.’ Savonarola himself considered the success he had met with as something quite extraordinary. ‘You know that in times past, it has not been possible by means of any proceedings of the magistrates, either by proclamations or by severe penalties, to put an end to that evil custom of throwing stones during the carnival, and that every year some one has lost his life by it; and now a humble friar with few words and by persuasion only, has stopped it. In the second place, you know that at this carnival time many sins were committed, and now even the children come to confession, and this last carnival has passed over as if it were Lent, which work can be no other than Divine. In the third place, that it was the custom to give money to the children to collect sticks and faggots for a bonfire, and to eat and drink; but now they obtain more money for the poor than you, with all your wisdom, have been able to collect.’—First Sermon in Lent, 1496.

the new Government, were called the Dieci di Libertà e Pace, and who had always continued friends of Savonarola, had laboured so effectually that the Pope granted him a license to preach during Lent. They had addressed many letters to several of the cardinals, and to their ambassador Ricciardo Becchi, to whom they said : ‘ You cannot do anything more gratifying or more acceptable to your fellow citizens ; and the prudence of the step will be acknowledged by the whole people.’ (January 26, 1496.)* It appears that, by the assistance of the cardinals of Naples and Lisbon, he had succeeded in some degree at least to appease the mind of the Pope ; for if he did not issue a new brief to revoke the suspension, he allowed a cardinal to grant permission to Savonarola to use his discretion about resuming his preaching.†

Another fact which deserves particular consideration appears to have occurred at this period, although the precise time is not given by the many historians who mention it. The Pope had remitted the power of granting permission to Savonarola to resume his preaching, to a learned Dominican bishop, who was to ascertain whether there was anything in his doctrine that ought to be condemned ; and this bishop returning with a volume of the Friar in his hand, said to the Pope : ‘ Holy Father, this Friar has said many things that are both wise and honest, and speaks against the simony and corruption of priests, which are certainly very great. He pays every respect to the dogmas and the authority of the Church, so that were I you I should rather be disposed to make him my friend, and, on a fit occasion, to offer him the purple of a Cardinal.’ Whether it was that the Pope now began to have some fear of the Friar, and did not wish to do more than silence him, or that he

* Documents published by Padre Marchese.

† Burlamacchi, Razzi, Barsanti, &c.

contemplated laying another snare to catch him, certain it is, that Savonarola received, by a Dominican purposely sent from Rome, the offer of the red hat of a cardinal, on condition that he would in future change the style of language he had been accustomed to use in his sermons. It is not easy to describe the confusion of mind, the indignation with which he received this unexpected offer. He now had in his possession most distinct proof of the venality with which everything the most sacred was treated at Rome; and such was his scorn that he would give no other answer to the Dominican who brought the scandalous proposal, than by saying: 'Come to my next sermon, and you shall then hear the answer I send to Rome.'*

Such were the auspices under which the Lent of 1496 opened. The crowd ran with redoubled curiosity to hear that voice which the thunders of Rome had for so many months reduced to silence. In the inside of the church, which in its usual state was not large enough to contain so great a multitude, a lofty amphitheatre was erected, rising to the first row of windows, with seventeen small steps on which the children were seated, who had now become a most important

* This fact does not rest on the sole authority of Burlamacchi, Razzi, Barsanti, &c., but is mentioned by Bozovio, by Fontana, and by Souveges; it is accepted as indubitable by Padre Marchese, Meier, Perrens, &c. Savonarola himself makes several allusions to it in his sermons and in his other works. 'I want no hat, nor mitre, great or small: I wish for nothing more than that which has been given to thy saints—death; —a red hat, a hat of blood, that is what I wish for.'—Sermons in the festivals of 1496, the nineteenth delivered on August 26. He on several occasions says: 'If I had wished for dignity, you know full well that I should not now be wearing a tattered cloak.' And in the first chapter of the Dialogue *De Veritate Prophetica*, he distinctly affirms that he had been tempted not only by threats, but by many offers. The authenticity of the fact is beyond all doubt, nor is it disputed by any one of his biographers. The date of the offer is the only uncertainty. We have thought it most appropriate to bring it forward in this place, because the first sermon in Lent, immediately following, appears to us most evidently to contain the answer sent to Rome; nor do we know at what other time the fact could have occurred.

part of his auditory, and he often directed his words to them. But on his way to the Duomo he found himself in danger of his life. Many of the Arrabbiati wished to murder him, and it was said that The Moor had sent hired assassins for that purpose. He arrived, under the protection of armed friends, who had voluntarily come forward to defend his life. They went to St. Mark's to bring him to the Duomo, and after they had heard the sermon, they accompanied him back to the convent, without leaving him a moment alone. This Lent was a season of new and greater exaltation to Savonarola. He ascended the pulpit with a mind filled with sadness and scorn; for he had passed through a struggle with the court of Rome, which became more and more fierce, and that at the very time when they were trying to corrupt him by an ecclesiastical dignity; he now came to reply to the unworthy offer, and had made up his mind to bring his cause before the world. His Lent sermons were more daring and more eloquent than any he had hitherto delivered; and we therefore feel bound to give a minute account of them in the following chapter.

CHAPTER III.

SAVONAROLA RETURNS TO THE PULPIT, AND PREACHES DURING
LENT OF 1496.

THE 17th of February, 1496, was a solemn day in the life of Savonarola. He had just received permission to preach, and the offer of a cardinal's hat; notwithstanding which, he perceived clearly that the animosity of the Pope was becoming every day more fierce, and that Borgia thirsted for his blood. In this state of mind he commenced his Lent service with discourses on Amos and Zechariah. If it had been a question affecting his own person only, he might have offered himself up as a victim for the peace of the Church; but the real object of the attack was, through him, the liberty of the Florentine Republic, of which he was considered by all as the living and speaking personification. In defending himself, therefore, he was defending the liberty and the religion of a whole people, who, through his means had expelled tyrants, and had returned to morality and the Christian faith. It was very certain that no one could entertain any doubt as to his religious doctrines; most assuredly not the Pope who had offered him the dignity of a cardinal, nor even the Arrabbiati, who hated him on account of the severity of the reforms he had made in the habits of the people, and could not endure the oppressive rigour of his piety. Nevertheless, both had agreed to conceal their political object under the mask of religion, hoping that by this

course they should more easily subdue him; and he, under the security of a clear conscience, determined to defend himself boldly on that ground.

The Signory had considered it necessary to take precautions that day against the disturbances they saw were about to take place. They knew that the Arrabbiati were quite prepared to murder the Friar, if they should succeed in laying hold of him by the way, and they were also aware of assassins for that purpose having been sent by The Moor. The attendants of the Otto, and some of the Gonfalonieri of the companies, therefore, kept guard in the streets to maintain order. So soon as Savonarola came forth from the convent, the shouting and cries of joy of the people who were waiting for him were excessive; and a large body of his friends, who had armed themselves, instantly surrounded him to prevent any possible insult, and accompanied him to the Duomo. The passions of men were in the highest state of excitement. Savonarola broke a silence of many months, which had greatly increased the desire to hear him; he was, moreover, expected to deal with a subject of the gravest nature; and it was known that his sermon would be immediately forwarded to Rome, to whose offers and blandishments he had promised to reply on that day. Arrived in the pulpit, he stood erect, and looked around him with a stern aspect, his eyes flashing like live coals; the multitude were so densely packed, that no one could stir; so profound was the attention and silence, that the very breathing of the preacher might be heard, so troubled was he by his great state of agitation. Controlling his feelings, he immediately began his discourse, and in the form of a dialogue.*

* 'The pulpit was the throne of Savonarola; for nearly three years he held the sway over Florence with as rigid a despotism as the Medici of old. His sermons are, to the Florentine history of his brief

‘Tell us, Friar, why you have been so long in a state of repose and have not come out to help your soldiers? My sons, I have not been in a state of repose, I have been in the field, and have been engaged in defending a rock, which, if it had been thrown down, you, perhaps, would also have been destroyed; but now, by the grace of God, through your prayers, we have been saved. But then, Friar, have you been afraid of being killed? Most certainly not, my sons; if I had been afraid, I should not have been here now, for my present danger is far greater than the former. Have you therefore had some scruples of conscience about preaching? Not I. Why then did you stop? we have heard that a sentence of excommunication has been received, and that you have been commanded not to preach—Have you read that sentence? Who sent it? But let us suppose it to be as you say, do not you remember that I told you that if it did come it would have no effect, and would be of no service to those wicked ones who are full of lies?—What has been the reason then, Friar, that you have kept us so much away

period, what the orations of Demosthenes are to that of Athens, of Cicero to that of Rome. Now it is that his eloquence swells to its full diapason. His triumphal career began with the Advent of 1494, on Haggai and the Psalms. But it is in the Carême of 1496, on Amos and Zechariah, that the preacher girds himself to his full strength, when he had attained his full authority, and could not but be conscious that there was a deep and dangerous rebellion brooding in the hearts of the hostile factions at Florence, and when already ominous rumours began to be heard from Rome. He that would know the power, the daring, the oratory of Savonarola, must study this volume. Nor do the discourses on the Festivals of the same year, on Ruth and Micah, fall much below this height. The Advent of 1496, the Lent of 1497, on Ezekiel, and above all, the last series, during the Lent of 1498, on Exodus, are those of a haughty mind, struggling bravely with his inevitable destiny; they are gloomy and solemn with his approaching end.

‘The sermons of Savonarola may be read even now with curious interest, and not seldom with admiration. What must they have been, poured forth without check, by the excited teacher, to a most excitable audience, by a man fully possessed with the conviction that he was an inspired prophet; to those who implicitly believed his prophetic gift!’—*Quart. Rev.*, vol. xcix. p. 25, ascribed to Dean Milman.—*TR.*

‘from you? I will now tell you, if you will listen to me patiently.’

‘I have said and considered that before I take my departure hence, *custodiam vias meas*; which means, I will look to my ways that they be clear from all contaminations. Seeing so much opposition raised from so many quarters, against an insignificant man not worth three pennies, I said in my heart—perhaps thou hast not looked well to thy ways, and thy tongue has been led astray; and I have therefore considered them one by one. I have looked only to the question of faith, for grammar and logic no longer belong to my office; and on that subject I have certainly found that my way has been perfectly clear, ‘because I have always believed, and do now believe, all that the Holy Roman Catholic Church believes, and to that I have always been and now am submissive.* I have written to Rome that if I have either preached or written anything heretical, I am willing to correct it, and to make here a public recantation. I have always been ready to show obedience to the Roman Church, and to say that he who does not obey her will be damned. I say, and do confess my belief, that the Catholic Church will abide until the day of judgement; and inasmuch as there are various opinions as to what clearly is the Catholic Church, I refer that to Christ, and to the decision of the Church of Rome.’†

* Sermon of February 17.—See *Prediche raccolte per ser Lorenzo Violi dalla viva voce del Reverendo P. F. Hieronymo da Ferrara, mentre che predicava*. Firenze, a dì Febbraio 8, 1496 (stile fiorentino). Several editions of them were published at Venice in 1514, 1519, 1539, 1543. These Venetian editions, however, are much mutilated, as for example that of 1514.

† The last two passages, the first of which, beginning: ‘I have written,’ and the other, ‘I say and do confess,’ are to be found in the last sermon preached this Lent, the first Sunday after Easter. We have introduced them here in conformity with our plan of bringing together as much as possible the scattered ideas of Savonarola, in order to avoid frequent repetitions. Besides, in the first and last of the sermons on

After making this explicit declaration, leaving not a shadow of doubt as to the entire Catholicity of his doctrines, he came to the boldest part of them. He then stated, that although the Church be infallible in her dogmas, it does not follow that we are bound to obey every sort of command that may be given by our ecclesiastical superiors, not even by the Pope. My superior cannot command me to do anything contrary to the constitution of my Order; nor can the Pope command me to do anything contrary to Charity, or contrary to the Gospel. I do not believe that the Pope wishes me to do anything of the kind, but were he to do so, I should tell him, Thou art not now a good shepherd, thou art not a member of the Roman Church, thou art in error.* This I maintain, 'When it clearly appears that 'the commands of our superiors are contrary to those of 'God, and especially to what charity demands, no one, 'in such a case, ought to obey them, for it is written: '*Oportet obedire magis Deo quam hominibus* (we 'ought rather to obey God than man). If, however, the 'case be not self-evident, if there be the slightest 'doubt, then we ought always to obey.' After laying down these premises, he proceeded to the consideration of his own individual case, saying, that he did not consider himself under any obligation to obey a command to leave Florence, for the whole city, down to the most simple maidens, knew that this order was solely political hatred, and that it would prove injurious not only to liberty but to religion. 'If I saw 'most clearly that my leaving a city would be attended 'with its spiritual and temporal ruin, I would not obey

Amos and Zechariah, he often refers to his submission to Rome, using almost the same words, as often as he reverts to the subject.

* These sentiments are to be found not only in the sermon of February 17, and in that on the Sunday after Easter, but throughout the whole of these Lent sermons, of which they form, as it were, the foundations.

‘ the command of any living man to quit it. And justly
‘ so, because it would be contrary to the command
‘ of the Lord; justly so, because I should be entitled
‘ to presume that my superiors had no intention of
‘ doing wrong, and that they must have been imposed
‘ upon by false information. O ye, who write such lies
‘ to Rome, what will ye now write? I know well what
‘ you will write. What will it be, Friar? Ye will
‘ write, that I have said that we ought not to obey the
‘ Pope, and that I do not mean to obey him. That
‘ I do not say. I have written what I have spoken, and
‘ you will see that ye cannot unsay it.’* The doctrine laid
down by Savonarola was strictly Catholic, and in no re-
spect differed from that which had been already said by
St. Thomas Aquinas, as well as by many doctors and
dignitaries of the Church; however, it was easy by
slight alterations of the words to give it a heretical
character; and his enemies endeavoured to do that.

He then proceeded with the thread of his discourse,
saying, that after having examined all his ways, and
having found them free from error, by having kept his
doctrine in true subjection to the Church; and having
become persuaded that the briefs which had come to
him from Rome were null, inasmuch as they were
founded on false information, and were wholly contrary
to charity, he had determined to proceed with prudence;
and that was the cause why he had, up to that time,
abstained from preaching. He would still have con-
tinued that silence, had he not seen that many good
men were growing cool, that the wicked were taking
courage, that the work of the Lord was falling into
neglect, and therefore he had resolved to come forward
boldly. ‘ But I first turned unto the Lord, saying—
I took delight in a peaceful and happy life; but Thou

* The first sermon on Amos and Zechariah.

hast drawn me forth, showing me Thy light; and I have been like a moth, which, attracted to the light, burns its wings. I have, O Lord, burnt my wings of contemplation, and I have launched into a tempestuous sea, where I have found contrary winds in every quarter. I wished to reach a harbour, but could not 'find the way thither; I wished to lay me down, but 'could meet with no resting-place; I longed to be silent, 'and utter not a word. But the word of the Lord is in 'my heart; and if it does not come forth, it must consume the marrow of my bones. Thus, O Lord, if it be 'Thy will that I should navigate in deep waters, Thy 'will be done.'

He concluded this sermon by a special address, first to the young men, of all of whom he entertained a favourable opinion; and then to the old, in whom he placed very little confidence. 'In you, young men, I place my hope, and the hopes of the Lord are in you. You will govern the city of Florence rightly, for you have not inclined to the evil direction of your fathers, who will not detach themselves from tyrannical rulers, and will not see how great a gift the Lord has bestowed upon the people, in the liberty they have received. But ye, old men, ye 'stand all the day collected in groups and in your 'shops talking wickedly, and ye send out from Florence 'letters full of lies, which lead many to the belief that I 'am a disturber of Italy, which has also been written to 'myself in papers of authority. O ye foolish men! *quis vos fascinavit, non obedire veritati?** Where are 'my troops, where are my funds, for the disturbance 'of Italy? It is not I who disturb Italy; but I most certainly declare to her that she will be disturbed. I proclaim that your sins hasten the coming of the scourge.' A great war, ye incredulous people, will force you to

* 'Who hath bewitched you that ye should not obey the truth?'—Epistle to the Galatians, iii. 1.—TR.

lay aside your pomp and pride. And as for you, women, a fearful pestilence will force you to lay aside your vanities; and the evil-tongued populace will be brought to silence by a terrible famine. Fellow-citizens, if you walk not in the fear of God, and be not firm in your attachment to a free Government, the Lord will cause evil to come upon you, and all the happiness promised to Florence will be reserved for your children.*

In this way he concluded the first of these sermons, in which he brought together, as if in a frame, all the subjects he meant to touch upon in that series. His doctrines were bold, his charges against Rome were most daring, the words with which he described the approaching scourge were words of fire; but not one word that he uttered could come under any imputation of heresy. We must also admire the prudence with which he restrained himself from taking any notice of the simoniacal election of Borgia, or of the hopes of a general council; nor did he make any allusion whatever to the offers he had received from the Pope. The generosity of his disposition would not allow him to take any advantage of a fact that would be useful to himself alone. Throughout these Lent sermons we find him ever preserving his true character, which was essentially Catholic, at the same time showing a moral courage and independence that few have exhibited either before or after him: nothing in this world could inspire him with fear, nothing could induce him to recede one step in his onward course. He stood there alone, to defend the freedom of the people and the freedom of individual reason and conscience; he held his banner aloft in his pulpit, and stood firm before the princes of Italy, in the face of the Court of Rome, fulminating ill-advised briefs against him; nor did he fear

* First Sermon on Amos and Zechariah.

the poisons and the daggers of the Arrabbiati in the streets, or in the church, or even in the pulpit itself.

His denunciations of the vices of Rome, and of the false and hypocritical religion of his day, were incessant and terrible throughout these discourses. On the second Sunday he delivered a sermon on these topics which became celebrated, not only for its boldness, which indeed was not greater than usual, but because its publication was prohibited by the Court of Rome.* It began with a strange interpretation of the following words:—*'Audite verbum hoc, vaccæ pingues quæ estis in monte Samariæ.'*† *'Come hither and tell me who are those who say that I ought to preach the Holy Scriptures? I preach no other, not I. If ye knew what Holy Scripture is, you would not talk thus. You might more readily have said, Preach to us about Tully and Virgil, and then I might not have touched you: but the Holy Scriptures in every part enable me to attack you. Well, then, I will preach the Scriptures; I will obey you. Tell me how you explain this passage of Scripture:—O vaccæ pingues. To me these fat kine mean the harlots of Italy and of Rome. Are none of these to be found in Italy and in Rome? a thousand would be a small estimate for Rome, ten thousand, fourteen thousand, would underrate their number; there men and women have become harlots.'* And proceeding thus, he describes the vices of Rome in words that cannot now be repeated. He then turned to the people, charging them with their false and hypocritical religion, and being satisfied only with material objects. *'Ye are corrupt in everything; in your*

* It has been cut out from almost all the copies to be found of these sermons: but may be seen in copies in the Magliabechian library, and in one in the Convent of St. Mark.

† *'Hear this word ye kine of Bashan, that are in the mountain of Samaria.'*—Amos. iv 1. *Pingues* is not translated in the English Bible; it is so in the German of Luther.—Te.

speaking and in your silence; in what you do and in what you do not do; in your belief and your unbelief. You declaim against prophecy, and some one tells you a strange dream and you believe in him. You fast on a certain Saturday at a prescribed hour, and you do so under the belief that you will thereby be saved. I tell you that the Lord desires not either certain days or certain hours, but that on every day of your life you should flee from sin. But you, on the contrary, are good in one hour of the day, that you may be wicked the rest of your lives. See what took place during the last three days of the Holy Week. 'Then were to be seen such runnings after indulgences and pardons; some one way, some another; some kissing the image of Saint Peter, some that of Saint Paul; some this saint, some that; such comings, and goings; ringing of bells, and decking out of altars, and adorning of churches; all this for three days before Easter, but no later. God is indifferent to these your doings. He takes no account of your ceremonies; because ye will be more wicked after Easter than ye were before. In these our days all is vanity, all is hypocrisy, true religion exists no more.'* In another place he observes: 'What if I should ask you to give me ten ducats for the poor: you would not; but but if I were to say, Lay out a hundred ducats on that chapel of St. Mark's, you would. It is for the purpose of putting up there your armorial bearings, and not for the honour of God. Look round the convents, and you will see their walls covered with coats-of-arms. Looking up at what is over the door, I fancied that I should see a crucifix, and it was a coat-of-arms: again I look up, and again a coat-of-arms meets my eye: nothing else is to be seen. I observe a drapery, and

* Sermon on the second Sunday in Lent.

‘conclude that it is over a painting of a crucifix, but I
‘find a coat-of-arms, which has been thus arranged to
‘be better observed by the people. These, then, are your
‘idols to whom your sacrifices are offered up.’* And
having thus described and condemned the corruptions
of his time, and particularly of the clergy, he proceeds
to announce the scourge by which Rome and Italy are
to be visited.

‘Prepare thyself, I say, O Rome, for great will be thy
‘punishments. Thou shalt be put in irons; thou shalt
‘be put to the sword; fire and flame will consume thee.
‘Poor Italy! how I see you crushed; poor unhappy
‘people, how I see you oppressed.† Italy will then be
‘stricken with a grievous sickness. Rome will then be
‘stricken with a grievous sickness, even unto death.
‘Thy health has vanished, and thou hast forsaken the
‘Lord; thou art laid low by sins and tribulations. If
‘thou dost desire to be restored to health, cease thy
‘feastings, lay aside thy pride, thy ambition, thy lux-
‘uries, thy avarice; these are the things which have fed
‘thy disease, which are leading thee to thy death. Italy
‘laughs at all this, scoffs at these things, will take no
‘physic, and holds the physician to be in his dotage.
‘O ye unbelievers, since ye will not hear, neither will
‘ye be converted; thus saith the Lord: as Italy is filled
‘with sanguinary judgements, with all kinds of iniquity,
‘with harlots, panders, and assassins, I will bring down
‘upon it a race of men the most wicked which can be
‘found; I will humble her princes, I will bring down
‘the pride of Rome: that race will take possession of
‘their holy places, will defile their churches, and after
‘they have made of them the haunts of harlots, I will
‘turn them into receptacles for horses and hogs, an
‘occupation less displeasing to God than that they

* Sermon on the Saturday after the second Sunday in Lent.

† Sermon on the Sunday next after Easter.

‘ should become stalls for prostitutes. When distress
‘ shall come, when tribulation shall draw nigh, they
‘ shall have no peace; they will desire to be con-
‘ verted but will be unable; they will be thrown into
‘ confusion and perplexity. O Italy, confusion upon
‘ confusion will be thy fate; the confusion of war
‘ will follow after famine; pestilence will follow after
‘ war; there will be confusion on every side. Ru-
‘ mour will follow rumour; a barbarian people will
‘ be heard approaching from one side, and a second
‘ barbarian people from another; there will be rumours
‘ from the east, and rumours from the west; every-
‘ where rumour upon rumour.’ ‘ Then will they seek
for the visions of the prophets, but will not find
them: for the Lord saith, Prophecy belongeth not to me.
They will have recourse to the astrologers, but in
them they will find no help. The law of the priests
will perish, their dignities will vanish, the princes
will put on haircloth, the people will be crushed by
tribulations. All men will become faint-hearted, and as
they have judged, so will they be judged in their
turn.’*

On another occasion, he thus describes the pestilence
he declares to be coming on Italy. ‘ Be assured that there
‘ will not be people enough left to bury the dead, and
‘ there will be no means of having numerous burials.
‘ There will be so many deaths in the houses, that men
‘ will go through the streets calling out—Bring forth
‘ your dead! lay them upon these carts and these
‘ horses, that they may be burnt in heaps. They will
‘ traverse the streets, crying with a loud voice, Who
‘ has any dead! who has any dead! and people will
‘ come out from their houses saying, Here is my
‘ son; and another, Here is my brother; and another,

* Sermon on the fourth Sunday in Lent.

‘ Here is my husband. Another time they will pass through the streets calling out: Are there no more dead? — who has any more dead? and so thinned will the population be, that very few will then remain.’*

Savonarola continued to preach in this manner throughout the whole of Lent. He first describes the sins of Rome and of Italy, announces [the scourge, and concludes with exhorting the people to repent. ‘ Alas! alas! alas! *fuge de terrâ Aquilonis* (Fly from the land of the North), that is from vices, and turn to Christ. Behold there comes a time of darkness, when He will rain fire, flame, and stones; and there will be a time of storms. I have placed you between four winds, saith the Lord, that is, between prelates, princes, priests, and wicked citizens. Fly from their vices, and unite together in Charity. *Fuge, O Sion, quæ habitas apud filiam Babilonis.*† Fly then from Rome, for Babylon means confusion, and Rome has confused all Scripture, has confounded all vices, and has thrown everything into confusion. Fly, therefore, from Rome, and turn to repentance.‡

These descriptions of the miseries of Italy, so vivid and distinct, seem almost to transport Savonarola to the very scenes, and to make him fancy himself an eyewitness of them. Nor is it less extraordinary how constantly he foretells his approaching death, and how persistently he repeats ‘The day in which you will be able to dispose of me, as it is your wish to do, is not yet arrived; *sed adhuc modicum tempus vobiscum*

* Sermon on Tuesday after the third Sunday in Lent.

† ‘Deliver thyself, O Sion, that dwelleth with the daughter of Babylon.’ —Zechariah ii. 7.—Tr.

‡ Sermon after the fifth Sunday in Lent. In all these extracts we have been careful to give the exact words of Savonarola, avoiding, however, the principal repetitions, and sometimes evident grammatical mistakes.

*sum.** † I have said to the Lord—To Thee I leave the thought of that work, I am only an instrument in Thy hand; and the Lord answered, and said—Leave that to me; it will happen to them, as it happened to the Jews, who thought to put an end to me by crucifixion; while they by that deed spread my name over the whole world. I therefore—he concluded—wish to be a valiant captain, to fight, and leave my body with you.’ ‡

But although he never ceased to offer resistance, and although the Pope had not been able to induce him to yield, he had, nevertheless, succeeded in putting him on his defence. Until now, the life of Savonarola had been one of direction, of command, instilling his own ideas and his own will into the minds of the multitude; his sphere of usefulness had always been on the increase; but now the field of his activity was narrowed; for he had now to devote his thoughts to the defence of his doctrine and of his life. His enemies multiplied around him; they had come to the resolution that if the Republic must stand, the author of it, at least, must perish; and the poor Friar was already encompassed by them on every side. He, however, defended himself with increasing energy; he proclaimed throughout Italy and the whole world, that in him they were slaying the Republic, were destroying the inviolable rights of human reason and conscience. But at the same time he felt that he must almost entirely abandon the causes of political and of moral reform, that his position was essentially changed, and that it had become every day more difficult, and attended with greater dangers.

He had not, however, wholly laid aside politics during this season of Lent, an occasion having presented itself,

* Sermon on Wednesday after the third Sunday in Lent.

† ‘Yet a little while am I with you.’—St. John vii. 33.—*Tr.*

‡ Sermon on Monday after the fourth Sunday in Lent.

to which he directed his attention for a few days. The question was concerning the completion of the new hall for the meetings of the Consiglio Maggiore, the erection of which the Government had early confided to the celebrated architect Cronaca, who, however, had gone on slowly with the work, until he was roused to greater activity by an appeal made to him by Savonarola in one of his sermons. He then made such rapid progress, that there was a saying current among the people that the angels had come to his assistance. On the 25th of February, 1,753 persons were assembled there, who proceeded to the election of the new Signory. Savonarola, in the fullness of his joy at this solemn event, devoted two of his Lent sermons to the political subjects it suggested. He directed his observations especially to the mode of conducting the elections, severely condemning the party spirit with which it was always contaminated.* 'Many are in the habit of distributing handbills through the city, denouncing such and such a person as not fit to be elected. I tell you, that you ought not to pay any regard to those handbills. If those whom you do not wish to be elected are bad men, say so openly in the Council, now that you have no despot to control you. Come forward, then, and declare your opinions frankly; that such a person is not the right man for the office. If, however, he be a right man, elect him.'† On another

* On April 27, in this year, a discovery was made of an agreement having been entered into by a large number of the citizens not to put in black beans, except for those who had been parties to the agreement. The chiefs of this conspiracy were Giovanni Benizi, Filippo Corbizzi (the same who, when Gonfaloniere, collected the theologians in the Palazzo to accuse Savonarola), and Giovanni da Tignano; and on the following day the Signory, after consulting the Collegi, and the Otto di Balìa and the Dieci di Libertà, condemned them to ten years of imprisonment, and to be for ever disqualified from holding any office or dignity in the State.—Rinuccini, *Ricordi Storici*, p. clx.

† Sermon on February 25.

occasion, he said : ‘I hear that some in the Council
‘ have said of some party man, let us give him a white
‘ or a black bean, according as he belongs to this or
‘ that party. *And, what is still worse*, I hear that
‘ there are some who say—He is a friend of the Friar ;
‘ let us give him a black bean.* How is this? is that
‘ the lesson I have taught you? I have no other friend
‘ than Christ, and him who does what is right; do
‘ not, therefore, act thus; for that is not what I would
‘ do; and, by following such a course, you will imme-
‘ diately create divisions. Let the elector give his vote
‘ to him whom he believes in his conscience to be a
‘ good and prudent man, as I have on other occasions
‘ advised you.’† And here we would observe, that
Savonarola, as we see him in his sermons, in his
writings, in the true history of facts, is a very different
person from that which he has been represented to be
in many biographies, ancient and modern. Where is
there to be found in him that party spirit, to promote
which, according to some, was the chief motive of all
his actions? Where that desire to help his own friends
and depress others? Where narrow opinions, un-
generous sentiments? On the contrary, we find a man
of the most exalted views, the noblest principles,
perfectly disinterested; a promoter of the liberty of
all, not excepting the very men who were seeking to
put him to death.

After having, on that solemn occasion, dwelt at some
length on the duty of making proper elections, free
from all party spirit, he recommended attachment to
the Consiglio Maggiore, to the new Government, and
to liberty. And, in order to impress those duties more

* All knew that a black bean was given in favour, and a white bean
for the contrary, so that to whiten (*imbiancare*) a person meant to reject
him. The phrase is commonly used in Florence at the present day.

† Sermon on the second Sunday in Lent.

strongly on the people, in both those sermons he gave lengthy descriptions of a tyrant, and of the evils he brings upon the city he oppresses. 'Tyrant,' he said, 'is the name for a man who leads a most wicked life; who thinks only of himself, and never of others; an enemy of God and man. He is proud, luxurious, and avaricious; and as these three vices contain the germs of all others, it follows that he contains within himself the seeds of all the vices of which man is capable. He has corrupted all the senses; his eyes see only wantonness; his ears hear nothing except praise of himself and abuse of others; his palate vitiates his appetite, and so forth. He corrupts the magistrates; he robs the widows and the orphans, of whom he is the guardian; he oppresses the people; he favours those who encourage him to rob the Commune. He is full of suspicion, and has spies everywhere; he wishes to see everyone abashed in his presence, and his slave; thus, where there is a tyrant, there can exist no freedom, either of action or of speech; and so the people become cowardly; every virtue is depressed, every vice encouraged. See then, Florence, what you have to expect, if you will have a tyrant. He is the cause of every sin committed among the people; therefore God will call him to account for them, and he will have to suffer the penalties for his own crimes, and for those of others. And you, citizens, who follow after him, you are not less miserable than he is. Your tongue is enslaved when you address him; your eyes, when you look upon him; your body is subject to him; your goods are his; he smites you with rods, and you must say in return, "I thank you." There is nothing but misery around you.' He concluded with these words: 'These are the miseries which a tyrant brings, and which those who submit to him must endure; miseries which they

must suffer in this life, to be followed by eternal damnation in the next.* This is a summary of what he minutely described, tracing, step by step, the whole life, every passion, every kind of oppression, of a tyrant. This frightful and horrid picture, drawn in parts with the greatest skill, he was continually setting up before the people, and he always concluded with — ‘Behold, Florence, that which you are in search of.’†

In these Lent sermons he also directed his attention to the children, who were seated in great numbers in the amphitheatre of the Duomo. He recommended to them the observance of charity, and attention to their education; he was desirous that none should continue in ignorance; that they should know, at least, the principles of language; and he enjoined their fathers to spare neither labour nor expense for this object. He likewise guarded the boys against assuming the clerical dress too early, and offered other useful advice. Palm Sunday being near at hand, he got up a solemn and very useful procession of the children. On that day the office-bearers of the Monte di Pietà were to be elected for the first time, and it was Savonarola’s wish, who had done much to promote its establishment, that it should be solemnly inaugurated by the children.‡ On that Sunday, therefore, early in the morning a canopy was fitted up in the church, on which was painted the entry of Christ into Jerusalem, seated on the ass. Savonarola, who arrived at a later hour, made an address

* Sermon on February 26, 1496.

† Sermons on Saturday after the first Sunday of Lent and on Monday after the third Sunday.

‡ See the sermons on Wednesday and following days preceding Palm Sunday. ‘I propose that the office bearers of the Monte di Pietà be elected; I am well pleased that this work should have a good beginning; the children will walk in procession on the occasion, and arrangements will be made for collecting alms.’—Sermon on Wednesday before Palm Sunday. On many occasions during this Lent, he particularly recommended the Monte di Pietà.

to the assembled children, giving them good advice, and ending with these words:—‘O Lord! from the mouths of these children will come forth thy true praise. Philosophers praise thee by the light of nature, but these children by a supernatural light; philosophers through self-love, but they in the simplicity of their hearts; philosophers with words, they with deeds.’ Then turning to the rest of the congregation, and holding up the crucifix, he said:—‘People of Florence! this is the King of the universe; He would be your King; will you have Him?’ To this all assented with loud voices, many shedding tears.* The Friar then came down from the pulpit amidst the enthusiasm of the people and the rage of the Arrabbiati, who, although they had kept at a distance, and in detached groups, never lost sight of him. The children, who wore white dresses, walked in procession carrying a canopy; they visited several churches, and stopped in the Piazza to sing a hymn composed by Girolamo Benivieni on the future felicity of Florence.† A large collection of alms was made, which was taken to the office-bearers of the Monte di Pietà, which had been solemnly inaugurated by this procession of children, who, under the guidance of Savonarola, had given up carnival amusements to devote themselves to works of charity.‡

If we except the two occasions when he spoke of the hall of the Consiglio Maggiore and the Monte di Pietà, Savonarola did not in any of these Lent Sermons allude to practical questions affecting the people of Florence. He continued as he had begun them, the last being delivered a week after Easter; that was the summing up, as the first may be said to have been the programme.

* See the Sermon preached on Palm Sunday.

† This hymn is printed in the collection of Savonarola’s poetry, in the edition of Florence, 1487.

‡ Burlamacchi, Razzi, &c. See the sermon on the Wednesday before Palm Sunday, and that delivered on Palm Sunday.

We find in them all the principal ideas which he proposed to expound. On the last day he again explicitly avowed his submission to the authority of the Roman Church, saying that it will stand firm to all eternity, and that he who would bring disunion into it will be damned; recognizing the authority of the Pope in the words of the gospel: 'Thou art Pietro, and on that Pietra (rock) will I build my Church, and what thou bindest on earth shall be bound in heaven.' But he goes on to say again—We are not, however, bound to obey all commands. If they proceed from false information they are not valid; if they are in evident contradiction to the laws of charity contained in the Gospel, it is our duty to resist them as St. Paul resisted St. Peter. We ought to suppose such a contradiction to be impossible; but if otherwise, we must then reply to our superior, you are in error; you belong not to the Roman Church; you are a man and a sinner. He supported those opinions by many quotations of authority, citing many examples—'If my superior were to command me to abandon my poverty, I resist; if your confessor commands anything contrary to God, you ought to resist and condemn him; when the thing is self-evident there is no ground for fear; the path of rectitude is the only one to follow.' However these opinions might be sustained by the authority of doctors, they certainly were very bold, and amounted to a declaration of war. Nor would Savonarola perhaps have proclaimed them from the pulpit, but for his conviction that the election of Pope Alexander was null* and for his cherishing a confident hope that a Council would before long put an end to the evils of the Church, desolated by so many indecent scandals, so many crimes, so many abominations.

* We must repeat that this was the opinion then maintained by many Catholic divines of authority, and which was afterwards by Pope Julius II. See Padre Marchese *Storia del Convento di San Marco*.

When he came to touch upon the individual case of his dispute with Rome, he that day repeated—‘Who does not know that the brief was issued in support of mine own enemies and of those of the Republic? men who have spread lies and calumnies against me. Who does not know that my leaving Florence would be attended with the greatest danger to my life, to the injury of this people, and the ruin of liberty? that moral habits would cease, and that religion would be laid prostrate. These and no other are what our enemies wish for. I am, therefore, bound to believe that the Holy Father has been deceived by the false accusations of my detractors. I obey rather what I believe to be his real intention, and will not believe that he could desire the ruin of a whole people.’

He on that day again announced his own expected death. ‘What will be the end of the war you are keeping up? If you ask me what the general end will be, my answer is, that victory will be the result; but if you mean my individual case, I reply, that I shall die, and be cut in pieces. But that will only serve to spread my doctrine more widely, which is not of me, but of God. I am but an instrument in His hands; therefore, I am determined to fight to the last.’ He told them that, in the course of the night, he had had a vision, when a crucifix appeared to him to rise between Rome and Jerusalem; that a river of blood flowed from it, in which infidels seemed eager to bathe, while Christians were avoiding it; that darkness then covered the earth; that it rained fire and arrows, and so forth. He adopted this mode of giving one of his eloquent and vivid descriptions of the scourges coming upon Italy, which he so often referred to during these Lent sermons, and with which he concluded them.*

Whole pages in these sermons demonstrate, that, in

* The last sermon in Lent on Amos and Zechariah.

other circumstances, and with other subjects, Savonarola would have been the greatest of Italian orators. There is a boldness and a fire of eloquence in his sentences which are quite original. His language is entirely so; and in the very manner in which his ideas are conceived there is a power wholly his own. His illustrations are given with a force—it may almost be said, with a degree of violence—so as quite to overpower the imaginations of his audience. If to all this we add the effect of his voice and gestures, we can understand the great enthusiasm of the Florentine people. The impression he produced this Lent was greater than in all preceding years, and the fame of these sermons spread everywhere; the rage of his adversaries rose to a climax; the devotion of his followers amounted to fanaticism; the princes of Italy protested; the Pope was furious; and it seemed as if the Vatican itself trembled under the thunders of his eloquence. In the next chapter we shall proceed to speak of the passions that were roused on every side.

CHAPTER IV.

VARIOUS WRITINGS ON THE DOCTRINES OF SAVONAROLA—LETTERS ADDRESSED TO HIM BY DIFFERENT PRINCES, AND HIS ANSWERS—CONVERSATION OF THE POPE WITH THE FLORENTINE AMBASSADOR—SAVONAROLA RETURNS TO THE PULPIT, AND PREACHES ON FESTIVAL DAYS ON RUTH AND MICAH.

[1496.]

TO have a just comprehension of the effect produced by the preachings of Savonarola, it is necessary to read the letters written in those days at Florence.* It would appear, indeed, as if the Florentines had had nothing else with which to occupy their minds than the Friar, and no one seemed able to keep within the limits of truth. Some said that he made a mockery of his excommunication, which had now arrived;† that he held the Pope to be worse than a Turk, and the princes of Italy worse than heretics: others asserted that he intended to reveal from the pulpit the sins of his persecutors, and that he was about to bring forth new and more wonderful prophecies. While some said that he had become the tyrant of Florence, others maintained that he would soon reduce the enemies of the Republic

* There are many among the miscellanies in the Magliabechian library, among others, cl. xxxvii., cod. 288.

† 'I can tell you that Frà Girolamo says very strong things; among others, that he has received an excommunication, but that he makes a mockery of it, as you know.'—Letter of Roberto Giugni to Lorenzo Strozzi alle Selve, March 18, 1496. See the Miscellanies above quoted.

to insignificance, if he did not put an entire end to them by some miracle; and all were in expectation of the occurrence of some great and wonderful events. Thus while exaggerations were produced by hatred and bad faith on the one hand, they were not less so by fanaticism and affection on the other; men's minds were getting more and more excited, and their passions were daily fed by some new aliment.

There issued from the press, at the same time, a considerable number of strange works, which threatened to form a new species of literature. In some Savonarola was exalted to the skies; in others no words, accusations, or slanders, were thought strong enough in blackening his character. The literary merit of these productions holds out no inducement to discuss them; but as they afford a picture of the time and of the writers we will say a few words respecting them.

One of the most notorious was called *Oraculum de novo sæculo* :* it was written by Nesi, a very distinguished pupil of Marsilio Ficino, deeply imbibed with neo-platonic ideas. The title was of itself sufficient to mark the author as a follower of Savonarola: he discourses, in fact, about a strange vision, in which he himself, being taken into another world, had a long interview with the shades of Eneas and Plato, whom he describes as the precursors of Christianity. He afterwards meets the elder Pico della Mirandola, who, conducting him to the celestial spheres, shows in them a representation of the doctrines of Savonarola; and continuing their celestial journey, Pico exalts the genius, the heart, the character of Savonarola, and concludes—*sed quid plura? Christi est in omnibus*

* This work was dedicated to the young Pico della Mirandola; was written in September 1496, and published *ex archetipo ser Laurentii de Morgianis, anno salutis, 1497*. Nesi wrote several sermons, tracts, and religious discourses.

emulator egregius; (what more need I say? — he is in all things a distinguished imitator of Christ.)

A preacher in the church of the Santo Spirito attacked the new doctrine, launched forth daily calumnies against the Friar, and challenged him to a trial by fire.* Savonarola treated all this with contempt, paying no regard to all the preacher had uttered. But an answer immediately appeared, in a work of Filippo Cioni, a Florentine notary, who took up the defence of Savonarola.† Another adversary, hoping to strike a more deadly blow, pretended to be one of his followers, and printed a letter in which, in the form of queries, he repeats the common charges against the Friar, that he had disseminated scandal in the church, had refused obedience to Rome, had called himself a prophet, and so forth.‡ Domenico Benivieni, the brother of the poet, and author of many religious works, soon unmasked the gross hypocrisy of the anonymous writer, by a letter from himself; and he afterwards, in several tracts, defended the doctrines and prophecies of Savonarola.§ In these he gave the history of his preach-

* The name of this preacher was Frà Leonardo, an Augustinian monk. 'See what the preacher in Santo Spirito said yesterday, how we have been deceived by Frà Girolamo; that he would remain a quarter of an hour in the fire, while he himself would remain half an hour. And he said, moreover, to all who were then present, that they should pray to God, that if that were true which the said Frà Girolamo averred, God might smite him (the preacher) with a boil that would be his death.' Another letter of Giugni, dated March 12, 1496, in the same miscellany.

† This work was reprinted by Quetif, in the additions to his life of Savonarola. It contains all the charges made against the Friar, to each of which there is an answer by Paolo da Fucecchio: the whole preceded by a preface by Cioni. There is nothing of any importance in the work, except that it is deserving of notice that the defender of the Friar, supported by the authority of the Council of Constance, maintains that the authority of Councils is superior to that of the Pope, without however, entering at all into any discussion of that argument.

‡ *Epistola responsiva a Frà Hieronymo da l' amico suo*; printed in the quattrocento, S. L. A.

§ *Trattato in difesa della dottrina e profezie di Frà Girolamo*;

ings, described the state of corruption and infidelity from which the Florentine people had been freed by the new doctrine; demonstrated its truth by the upright life of those who were guided by it, and its perfect agreement with the Gospel; concluding with an enumeration of the many prophecies of the Friar, pointing out those that had come to pass, as well as those which were in progress of fulfilment.

While these discussions were proceeding with much animation, a certain friar Angelo, an anchorite in the hermitage of Vallombrosa, printed and published some letters directed to the Governments of Italy. To the Signory and people of Florence he confirmed the promises made by Savonarola, and pretended to have had a special inspiration of the Sacred Scriptures; declaring that he had found in the Apocalypse a prediction of the descent of Charles VIII. into Italy, and of his progress to the East, in order to re-establish the

Firenze, May 28, 1496. This tract is divided into fifteen chapters; we find in them the whole history of Savonarola's preachings, and of several of his visions and prophecies. *Dialogo di M. Domenico Benivieni, canonico di San Lorenzo, della verità della dottrina di Frà Hieronymo.* In this dialogue there is an enumeration of many works published or written concerning the Friar, among others: *Contro i vituperatori del nuovo governo*, di Bartolommeo Scala (it is in Latin, and is in the Magliabechian library, printed at Florence, Kal. September, 1496); *un disteso Trattato, con lettere ai principi*, di Frà Paolo Nolano; *una Epistola invettiva a proposito della lettera a Carlo VIII. ec.* The letter which Benivieni wrote in reply to the feigned friend was entitled *Epistola di M. Domenico Benivieni a uno amico, responsiva a certe obbiezioni e calunnie contro a Frà Girolamo.* Benivieni wrote besides a great many letters, sermons, dialogues and religious tracts; among which we may mention for its singularity that entitled, *Scala spirituale sopra il nome di Maria.* The five letters composing that name are taken for the initials of the words which represent the five steps of this ladder on which the author discourses. Amid all these things Benivieni quite lost himself. Not to increase without end the catalogues of these writings, we will conclude with pointing out one of the young Pico: *Defensio Hiero: Savonarolæ adversus Samuelem Cassinensem*, per Io. Franc. Picum Mirandulanum, ad Hieron. Tornielum, Anno 1616, in metropoli quâ Fracia mixta Suevis. Of this work, which is different from the *Apologia* which the author wrote at a later period, an edition is quoted as published in 1497. See Meier, p. 320.

Christian empire, and said that he had also written to the Churches of Africa and Asia, to announce approaching events. He sent another letter to the Doge and Senate of Venice, disapproving of their policy, and that of the League, who, in opposing Charles, were opposing the will of the Lord, who had elected him for that enterprise.*

It was certainly a singular circumstance, that a friar should send forth from his hermitage an account of the armies of the Turk and of France, and enter into a discussion on the probability and the consequences of a war in the East. But politics had then created so very general an interest, that scarce anyone could be found who was not planning some designs for the future in his own mind, and men of all parties took up the pen. Political publications multiplied daily, and the Arrabbiati sought by them to give vent to their passions—to their uncontrolled hatred for Savonarola; for there was no way they left untried to strike a blow at him. Scarce a day passed that the Otto did not discover some attempts upon his life; and they on several occasions subjected to torture persons so accused; nor were there wanting, it is said, cases in which the crime was so nearly being committed, that they passed sentence of death.† This struck no terror into the Arrabbiati, who carried on their plots with undiminished audacity; and when they could not employ steel, they had recourse to the pen, which had become necessary, as the Friar, in consequence of the briefs from Rome,

* The first of these letters was written in June 1496, the second, addressed to the Florentine Signory, was dated January 1497, and was in answer to some who said, it was not enough that we must be tormented by friars, but that we must now have anchorites also. That to the senate and Doge of Venice was also written in January 1497. The greater number of the above mentioned works are in the Magliabechian library, and are entered in the last catalogue of the quattrocantisti, drawn up by Molini.

† *Lettera del Giugni*, March 18, 1496, quoted above.

was living retired within the walls of his convent. Letters in prose and in verse, sonnets, songs, ballads; every form of writing was employed that could serve to heap injuries upon him.

A certain Girolamo Muzi wrote a ballad beginning—

O popolo ingrato,
Tu ne vai preso alle grida,
E drieto a un guida
Piena d' ipocrisia . . .

O ungrateful people,
Thou art misled by a cry,
And follow a guide
Full of hypocrisy.

He not only attacked Savonarola, but, turning upon the magistrates, reprehended their conduct, saying:—

Che i ducati o marroni,
Le some dei capponi
Giovenchi,† han sì gran forza,
Che rompono ogni scorza
Ch' è innanzi alla giustizia.

Ducats or chesnuts,
Loads of capons and
Beeves, have such power,
That they pierce any rind
In which justice is encased.

And he ventured upon such a degree of insolence, that he was sentenced by the Otto to a prohibition from holding any public office for five years, and a fine of sixty golden florins.*

But a much more clear idea of the language made use of by the Arrabbiati will be found in the *Defensione*

* This ballad, which the Otto condemned as culpable, had not been printed, but several copies of it had been given by the author to a friend, that one might be sent to Savonarola, another fixed up in the Dromo, a third in the Palazzo of the Signory, &c. The ballad itself, as well as the condemnation of it by the Otto, January 16, 1496 (florentine style), are to be found in the *Archivio delle Riformagioni*.

† Giovenchi capponi, young capons, may possibly be the meaning.

—TR.

contro all' Arca di Frà Girolamo, written by Francesco Altoviti.* The author speaks of having suffered exile, and every sort of persecution, by the tyrants, and of his loving liberty above all other things, in the defence of which he now writes against Savonarola. He thus describes him: 'He appears to be so blinded and so excited by vice, and the despotism of pride, and, pretending to have spoken with the Almighty, he thinks that he ought to rule the State and its armies as a dictator; to give laws to this city, and to the whole world, like Moses; and by force and menaces to oblige the pontifical power to accept them.' He laments that the Friar has done away with the festivities of St. John's day; has destroyed the carnival, and all the gaieties of Florence, and, not finding more opprobrious terms, he goes on to say, that 'He wishes to be a tyrant; and if, at any time, he has met with opposition in this, he has become somewhat mitigated, because Piero has become his friend. And now there can be no doubt that where Frà Girolamo is, there Piero de' Medici will be found; and he who supports Frà Girolamo supports Piero de' Medici. Therefore, whoever wishes to destroy the very name of tyrant, must destroy that of the Friar, for he is the father of the tyrant, and the tyrant's lieutenant;' and so forth. It would be difficult to imagine anything more absurd; and yet such was the daily language of the Arrabbiati.

The followers of Savonarola (the Frateschi) did not, it is true, always remain silent, but occasionally gave forth their bile, as may be seen by the following verses:

Voi ridete, e con sonetti
 Dispregiate il divin verbo;
 Ma spectate il duro nerbo
 Che le spalle vi rassetti.

* An edition of the fifteenth century, but without date, is in the Magliabechian library.

Su, mosconi, a scompigliare ;
 Scarafaggi, a vostra stalla ;
 Calabron che siete a galla,
 Fate i vizi un po' svegliare.
 Ma sappiate che mai falla
 La iustizia col supplicio . . . *

You laugh, and with sonnets
 Mock the divine word ;
 But beware of the hard thong
 Which will be laid upon your shoulders.
 Hence, gnats, away, disperse and fly ;
 Beetles, hasten back to your holes ;
 Hornets which exulting soar,
 Waken to your vices more.
 But know there will not fail
 Justice with punishment.

These compositions sometimes appeared as published works, at other times as fugitive pieces that were circulated among the people or fixed up at the corners of the streets, but most frequently in the form of verses, which were recited and sung through the city, and with which the Piagnoni and the Arrabbiati assailed each other when they met in the streets. If, however, we desire to have a true knowledge of the political character of Savonarola's followers, we must not look for it in those writings in which abuse is repelled by abuse. We ought rather to seek for it in that far larger number of prose and poetical productions in which the Florentines exalt the name and grandeur of their native land, in which new laws and new reforms are brought forward, and in which the true nature of those that had already acquired vigour is discussed.

We must now notice some short treatises, *Sul Cambio* (on Exchanges), *Sul Monte Comune* (on the National Bank), *Sul Monte delle Fanciulle* (on the Young Maidens' Bank), because they were addressed to

* They are printed, and are in the Magliabechian library ; see among the quattrocentisti, G, Custodia 14.

Savonarola and to his convent by Frà Santi Rucellai, and for this reason, that while they treat of some most important institutions in the Florentine Republic, they give some very useful information on the condition of its finances at that time.* But the most important publi-

* These unpublished treatises are in the Magliabechian library, cl. *xxix.* cod. 207. That on Exchanges is the least important; the second gives an account of the institution of the National Bank, which, as all know, was a bank for the voluntary or forced loans, which the Government made in the event of a war, or on other urgent occasion, with obligations for repayment. They very soon, however, according to Frà Santi Rucellai, began to refuse the restitution of the capital, paying for it 5 per cent. interest: this was afterwards reduced to 3 per cent., which was sometimes paid and sometimes not. 'Matters got worse and worse; at first he who held a bank note of 100 florins could sell it for 80, then it fell in value to 66, to 50, and in my day it was depreciated to 30, 25, 20, and in this last war, was not worth more than 10.' This seems to be almost incredible, but, however, such was the real state of the Republic during the war, of which we shall have to speak in the next chapter. The third treatise is on the Young Maidens' Bank, a very ingenious institution of the Republic, and much valued by the Florentines. It took its rise in this way: When the Government felt that they could no longer pay the debts they had contracted with the citizens, with the view of reconciling public and private interests, they established this bank. They reasoned thus:—If he who has a Government bill for 100 florins cannot sell it for more than 16, it is evident that this capital amounts to no more than 16 florins. Now, whoever will take this Government bill to the Young Maidens' Bank, and leave it there for sixteen years, without interest, shall receive at the end of the sixteenth year a dowry of 100 florins. If ten such bills be deposited, the dowry will be 1,000 florins, and so on in proportion. If it should be desired to have a dowry of 100 florins at the end of twelve years, then bills of the effective value of 24 instead of 16 must be deposited. There were certain officers of the bank whose duty it was to decide upon the effective value of the bills, which varied from day to day, and on being informed in how many years the dowry was to be paid, they determined the amount of the bills to be deposited. He who did not hold these bills could easily buy them. In this way individuals derived advantage, and the Government gained considerably, for if the maiden who was to receive the dowry died in the meantime, the bank kept the whole deposit, and if she became a nun, they were only obliged to give up the effective value of the bills which had been deposited. These obligations of the Young Maidens' Bank were always considered to be inviolable, and were scrupulously paid by the National Bank. Nevertheless, in the war of 1496, the finances of the Republic got into so ruinous a state, that when the dowry became payable, only one-fourth part of the promised capital was paid in money, deducting also the expenses of the contract, the remaining part being retained under an obligation to pay 7 per cent. interest. This of course had the effect of lowering the value of the Young

cations, those which give the most vivid representations of the followers of the Friar, were those composed by the middle classes, which, although ungrammatical in language, were dictated by a spontaneous impulse for their own gratification. One of them, which gives us a good sample of the rest, has this title: *Riforma santa ha fatta Domenico Cecchi, per conservazione della città di Firenze* (the holy reform brought forward by Domenico Cecchi, for the preservation of the city of Florence). The author assigns the following reason for writing this book: 'From the great love I bear this people, I have yielded to my fancy to write this work, and I can give no other; and it has, by day and by night, been forced upon me, so that I might almost say a miracle has been wrought through me, by which I am quite overpowered.' Cecchi is a true type of the popular fanaticism produced by Savonarola's preaching; politics and religion are strangely mixed up in his work; he reasons as if a superior power constrained him to give advice to the Republic, and his natural genius overflows with enthusiasm and love of liberty. His book is a curious mixture of ignorance of the first rudiments of writing, and of a remarkable political acuteness; his suggestions show him to have had rare good sense, and we would almost be disposed to say that they were founded on consummate experience in State affairs. He proposes that the Consiglio Maggiore should be relieved from deliberating upon an infinite number of small matters, which not only take up much time that ought to be given to things of greater moment, but disgusts many

Maidens' Bank obligations to such an extent, that they were at a discount of 25 per cent. These variations in the value of the issues of both banks gave rise to the same mania of speculation as we now see in the public funds, the fatal consequences of which historians frequently lament.

from attending the meetings.* He discusses the subject of the 10 per cent. tax on property, and shows the very great advantages of having only one tax like this, strongly condemning the arbitrary imposts,† which he says ‘are undermining the city:’ he approves of ecclesiastical property being made liable to taxation, ‘and would have a limit set to the amount of dowries, that neither gentleman nor operative should be prevented from having a daughter married.’‡ In this work we find the first idea of creating that civic militia which at a later period was instituted by Machiavelli, and which so heroically defended the Republic. Cecchi recommends that officers should be appointed to teach the art of using arms to those who either in the town or in the country are entitled to carry them. ‘And thus, besides the advantages that would be derived from the pay of such soldiers circulating among the citizens, you must see that we should have a better return from a thousand of our own men than from three thousand hired foreigners. And laws such as these,’ he thus concludes, ‘will convert bad into good citizens, and all will live in Florence in a state of happiness. They will in due time bring about reform, union, and peace in the rest of Italy, for all will come to learn from us, this city being the very axle and heart of Italy.’§

* This occupation of the time of the Signory and Council with trifling matters, causing much loss of time, and being in other respects productive of much mischief, is blamed by every historian. In the month of March 1495, the Consiglio Maggiore was twice called upon to pass a provision granting permission to two citizens to change their dwellings from one part of the city to another. This is quite sufficient as an example. These two provisions may be seen in the *Archivio delle Riformazioni*.

† These arbitrary imposts, as we have said, were levied without law or rule, upon all descriptions of property, except ecclesiastical.

‡ The author fixes what he considers should be the maximum of a dowry: that the largest should not exceed 500 gold florins; that that for artificers should not be more than 300, for peasants 50, and for those in the city not liable to taxes, 100.

§ We owe our being able to quote this work, which is not in the

We will conclude this account of popular literature by placing, parallel with the words of Cecchi, the verses of a certain author, who signed himself *Io Giovanni non sere nè messere, ma sarto fiorentino* (I, John, who am neither gentleman nor lord, but a Florentine tailor). He shows the same enthusiasm for the Republic as Cecchi—the same patriotic zeal; and although by no means learned, he rarely commits the same mistakes in grammar and orthography. In one of his sonnets he condemns those who are always looking for office, but refuse to come forward for their country in any service of danger; and he bestows great praise on those who are fighting in the battle-field of Pisa. In another, he upbraids those Bigi who hypocritically pretend to be Piagnoni, and tells them that they will not succeed in their intention:—

O prete, o frate, o secolare strano,
Sia chi vuol, che non terrà la bocca
Al popol fiorentino alto e sovrano.
Che chi al popol vorrà porre il freno,
Cadere lo vedrò in un baleno.

Whether a priest, friar, or foreign secular,
Who'er he be, who will not himself refrain
Before the high and sovereign Florentine.

Magliabechian library, and is very scarce, to the kindness of Mr. Seymour Kirkupp, a learned English gentleman long resident in Florence, who has a most valuable library of Italian books and manuscripts. It consists of 28 leaves, and on the last page it is stated that it was finished on February 24, 1496 (Florentine style). 'It was printed by Francesco di Dino, and corrected with the utmost diligence by Domenico di Ruberto di ser Mainardo Cecchi.' The title of the book is also remarkable, and one quite characteristic of a Piagnone: 'Jesù—a holy and precious reform brought about by Domenico di Ruberto di ser Mainardo Cecchi, for the preservation of the city of Florence and the public good; and this is the good and the true light, and a treasure to everyone, and to the city, and will cause justice and good government to be observed. And take good heed of everything in it; that this is the true and the right way to arrive quickly at the great felicity of everyone, and then, before long, of all Italy, and the rest of the whole world, for she will learn from this.'

Know that the man who dares to curb their will,
Is fated in a lightning's flash to fall.

In some stanzas, he praises love of country, and obedience to the Consiglio Maggiore; he exalts the future glory of Florence, blames the policy of The Moor, the Venetians, and the whole League, and threatens the Pisans with impending ruin :

Però bisogna che il Pisano cali,
Co' ferri a' piedi giù nella sentina,
Po' ch' è stato cagion di tanti mali.
E la famosa patria fiorentina
Ir' alia stae come bel falcone,
E la Lega niente lo domina ;

Però non creda nessun sottoposto
Uscire delle branche al gran liono.
E chi lo ingannerà, tornerà tosto,
A suo dispetto, sotto il suo artiglio
Come Cristo superno ha ben disposto.*

The Pisan, who has been the cause of so much ill,
Must now descend, and in his downward path,
With fetters on his feet ;
Whilst the famed country of the Florentines
Soars like a beauteous falcon on the wing,
Free from the domination of the League ;

For let not any subject to that rule
Believe he will escape the Lion's claws ;
And he who purposes to play him false
Will likewise turn and tear him with his talons :
This is the will of Christ, who orders all aright.

In considering these verses, and many others, which were then in general circulation, we at once perceive the great difference between the productions of the Arrabbiati and the Piagnoni. In the followers of the Friar we find honesty and good faith ; while his adversaries exaggerate, calumniate, falsify, and are distrustful of each other. If, setting aside the writings of the latter, we only consider those of the former, they are divisible into two distinct kinds—the political and

* At the end of the *Ottava* is added, 'finis, Dec. 31, 1496;' and at the end of the following *terzina*, 'finis, July 19.' The war with Pisa is mentioned, the retreat of the Emperor, &c.

the religious. They are very widely distinct, not only in respect of the difference of the subject, but by the genius of the writer and the manner of treatment. The popular writers discourse on politics, the learned on religion. The former have no literature; the latter overflow with Greek, Latin, the Aristotelian and Platonic philosophy; but if we are to decide by their real value, the palm must undoubtedly be given to the popular writers. All these works were, in fact, the fruits of political and of religious lives. The popular productions might be likened to a tree planted in a fruitful soil, and in a congenial climate: soon spreading its verdant and vigorous branches; while those on religion, on which Savonarola had bestowed the most assiduous tender care, might be likened to a plant in an ungrateful soil, whose growth depended upon continual culture.

The Florentines were a people essentially political, and so quickly did they resume their ancient nature, that it seemed as if the Republic had never ceased to exist. While the popular writers abstained from touching upon religious subjects, deeming that it would be profanity in them to do so, we find reasoning and writing on politics to be their almost daily occupation; their very blunders in spelling and grammar give us a more complete manifestation of their nature; full of life, vigour, and spontaneous originality. If it be asked, whether in this revival of the Florentine spirit the learned were occupied with politics, and what was the merit of their writings, we would reply, that the genius of Machiavelli, of Guicciardini, of Giannotti, began to shoot forth in that same Republic, and was expanded by the sun of that liberty; that they were unquestionably the sons of the revolution of 1494, of that revolution initiated by Savonarola. We find, in truth, political life active and flourishing in every direction. The new laws and reforms were

discussed with marvellous skill, and passed with the greatest facility. A young race came forth, and their elders showed consummate skill in state affairs. Nor were their military operations less ably conducted. Piero Capponi, the soul of them, acquired increasing fame in the Pisan campaigns, and the valiant Antonio Giacomini soon became illustrious; everything was conducted in a way that would have done honour to a Republic long experienced in war, while this had as yet scarcely thrown off the yoke of a sixty years' servitude. And if in founding the new Republic Savonarola was the chief author of the vigorous exercise of liberty, he had brought out the virtue inherent in the Florentine people, who thus at once came forth in their true character. It survived the death of the Friar, and when the strength of their many enemies was exhausted, it revived more gloriously; but when they were surrounded by powerful armies, their fall could not be arrested; but they fell heroically, and their fame will be eternal.

A very different view lies before us when we turn to the religious life of that same people. We find something in it forced and ephemeral, which we know not how to define, but which no one can fail to perceive who reads the histories of those times, and the religious writings of Savonarola's followers. They knew no better than to reproduce feebly the ideas of their master, to repeat his own words without any warmth of feeling. Not one original thought is brought out, not one vigorous expression drops from their pen.* This people, said to have had a new birth in religion, was not able to leave to posterity a single memorial of its faith; Savonarola alone is truly and profoundly religious; he seems to be the only real man in the midst

* We might except Frà Benedetto, but he is only original and eloquent when he is narrating past events: if he enters upon a religious discussion he does not rise above the common low standard.

of a changeable world of dreams which vanish. There was certainly a great religious reform, a general moral improvement, but the people who ran spontaneously to receive the liberty which had been restored to them, had to be kept steady to their religious faith by listening daily to the sermons of the Friar. No sooner did they cease to hear him than their vices and their incredulity returned. It is evident to everyone that the Republic, but not religion, survived him.

However Savonarola might wish to conceal the reality from himself, he could not fail to perceive it on many occasions. He then sharply rebuked the people he so dearly loved; threatened them with the anger of the Lord, and told them that the promised felicities would be changed into fearful punishments. It was almost a necessity in him to believe and to hope in that multitude, but the natural onward course of events, which was inevitable, dragged him fatally along. He had begun to speak of religion and morals when the Florentines had been awakened to a love of liberty; he had aided them by advising and establishing the new Republic, and he all at once became the idol of the multitude; but while he wished to enlist politics and liberty in the cause of religion, the Florentines, on the contrary, would have religion enlisted in the service of liberty. On every occasion when the Friar in his sermons kept politics entirely out of view, the attention of his audience ceased; he was thus constrained to proclaim Jesus Christ king in Florence, to represent the Virgin giving counsel to him in the pulpit in favour of the new constitution, and that the Lord had commanded the abolition of *Parlamenti*. It was constantly necessary for him to liken the new Government to the angelic hierarchy, and the various phases in the Florentine revolution to the seven days of the creation! But, in truth, while Savonarola seemed to be omnipotent over

the Florentines, he had found an insuperable obstacle in their religious indifference: the only part of the work of the Medici which he had been unable completely to destroy. The people ran from doubt to fanaticism, and from fanaticism back again to doubt, without his being ever able to make them truly religious, however earnestly he might labour in that cause.

This is a fact of the greatest importance, and deserving our serious consideration: because it alone gives us the key to a right comprehension of the unexpected conclusion of the singular drama of the life of Savonarola. He wished to be the renovator of religion; the Florentines worshipped him as the founder of their Republic. They defended him with boldness against the Pope, because His Holiness wished to bring back the Medici to Florence, and thus the cause of the Friar had become the cause of liberty. But no sooner did Alexander Borgia, who was wholly indifferent about religion, succeed in separating the one from the other, than Savonarola could no longer reckon upon the same boldness, the same zeal; the ground was trembling under his feet.

We now return from the interrupted course of our narrative, to the Friar's sermons on Amos and Zechariah, by which the fame of the new doctrine was spread over the world. They were much spoken of in the East, where the Sultan, in order to read them, had them translated into Turkish.* From France, Germany, and England, letters came to Savonarola from new followers, whom the reading of his sermons had enlisted.† In the same time the princes of Italy wrote to him, making bitter complaints; for every

* Burlamacchi, p. 71.

† Savonarola mentioned this frequently in his sermons. 'Even from Germany we have had letters from those who believe in these things,'—See his Sermons on Exodus, fol. 39, Firenze, 1498.

one of them, either from false reports or from an uneasy conscience, believed himself to be personally referred to in those sermons in which the Friar condemned tyrants and their vices.

This was especially the case with Ludovico The Moor, who wrote to Savonarola that his life had been without a stain, and thoroughly Christian, and that he, therefore, could not understand how he was continually making accusations against him; whereas he (Ludovico) might more justly have condemned him, Savonarola, for having said that we ought not to obey the Pope. The Friar did not allow this letter to remain without an answer; he wrote to him, on the 25th of April, with all the courtesy due to a prince, but at the same time maintaining a dignified reserve towards a man who had been the cause of so much injury to Italy, and who was so deadly an enemy of the Republic. 'It is not true,' he said, 'that I have ever absolutely declared that we ought not to obey the Pope; for that would have been most reprehensible, and in direct opposition to the sacred canons, by which I have always been governed. And, moreover, in order to bring a charge against me, it has been falsely reported, that I had spoken disrespectfully of your Highness. I have a regard for all persons, and ought not to allude to any individual. If your Highness be in the state of mind towards God that you say you are, you have only to persevere in it; and of this you can have no better judge than your own conscience.'*

For the same reasons, Savonarola had to write to Galeotto Pico, Prince of Mirandola, and he addressed him in the same style. That prince tyrannised most cruelly over his subjects, and he also believed that he had been specially pointed at in the sermons. The Friar

* This letter exists at Milan, and had never been published.

denied his having made any personal accusations, declared that his only duty was to announce the coming scourge, and to exhort everyone to turn to repentance.* This prince was the brother of the celebrated Pico della Mirandola, and the father of the other who wrote the biography of Savonarola, but he was wholly opposite to him in disposition. His life was a continued series of atrocious cruelties, and he kept his mother and a brother prisoners for a long time in the dungeon of a tower. In consequence of this, Savonarola changed his language to him, and on the 26th of March, 1496, addressed the following very threatening letter to him. 'I exhort you to be converted to God, to live as becomes a good Christian, to grieve for what is passed, and return to a course of piety. If you do not, I now give you warning that a great scourge will come upon you, and you will be punished in your property, in your person, and in your family. I tell you more, that what you will suffer in this life will be little, for if you do not that which I now tell you, you will go to hell, and this letter will be laid before the tribunal of God, and you will be unable to offer any justification of your conduct.†' The younger Pico observes on this subject—'My father was then in the prime of life, in perfect health, with a prospect of arriving at old age; but he survived that truly prophetic letter only two years; and both then and since, the history of our family has been one long tragedy of blood, the end of which no one can foretell.' The unhappy youth little thought that he himself was to be one of the victims in that prophetic tragedy of Savonarola. On the 5th of February, 1533, he was murdered by his own nephew.

But of all the enraged princes, the Pope was by far

* This letter has been published by Padre Marchese, but is without date.

† This letter has also been published by Padre Marchese.

the most. He made continual and threatening complaints to the Florentine ambassador, Ricciardo Becchi, not only of the Friar, but still more of the Signory, who had allowed him to preach. The Dieci wrote again and again in his defence, but the anger of the Pope became greater and greater; so that to try to calm him they sent Niccolò Pandolfini, archbishop of Pistoia, as ambassador extraordinary. No sooner was he in the Pope's presence than Borgia began to make sharp complaints of the Florentines, for having always kept up their alliance with France, for refusing to join the holy league for the expulsion of the barbarian, and for thereby bringing ruin upon Italy. He then spoke about the Friar, shortly, but quite enough to show his dark and thorough hatred, and ill-repressed rage. The archbishop endeavoured to make the best excuse he could for the Republic; that as regarded the French alliance, it was an adherence to the faith of treaties; and as to the league, that the Venetians and The Moor had always shown the greatest hatred of the Republic. In reply to what the Pope had said of the Friar, he reminded his Holiness that he had, through the medium of a cardinal, granted him permission to preach; and, therefore, the Signory, in giving him leave, had no idea that they were incurring the risk of being charged with disobedience. Upon this, the Pope suddenly put an end to the conversation, saying, 'Well, well, we will not now talk about Frà Girolamo; there will shortly, in all probability, be a much fitter opportunity; as to the other matter, you give only words, and wish to sit firm in the saddle;*' and so ended that first interview.

Meanwhile, the Pope summoned a consistory of fourteen Dominican theologians, to inquire into the

* Pandolfini gave a minute account of this conversation in a letter to the Dieci of March 24, 1496, which is to be found among the documents published by Padre Marchese, in the *Archivio Storico*.

conduct and doctrine of Savonarola; so that a way might be found of condemning and severely punishing, not only him, but also his followers. It was most remarkable, that, during all the time these theologians met, the principal charge brought against Savonarola was that of having been *the cause of all the injuries Piero de' Medici had suffered*;* an indubitable proof, if any were wanting, that political hatred, and not any religious question, was the moving power. The Florentine ambassador, Becchi, had not remained idle; but, availing himself of the goodwill and recommendations of some of the cardinals, he went from house to house of the rest, to try to turn them in favour of the Republic, and to gain time; for more he could not then accomplish.

Savonarola, in the meantime, having finished his Lent sermons, went to Prato and Pistoia; and after having rested a short time with his brother friars there, returned to Florence.† He then made an exertion to publish a treatise, entitled *Della Semplicità della Vita Cristiana*, which he intended to be a serious reply to the Court of Rome; being an exposition of the whole Catholic doctrine, in order to give the lie to the charges of heresy and schism which were to be brought against

* This at least is the only subject which the ambassador Becchi notices in a long account of the consistory contained in a letter dated April 5, 1496, published among the documents of Padre Marchese.

† Mention is made of this journey by the Dieci in a letter to Becchi, which is referred to by Padre Marchese, in a note to his documents, in which, however, he has made a mistake as to the date, which was April 16, 1496, and not '98. The words of the Dieci are these: 'We understand that he is gone on a visit to Prato and Pistoia, and we can only laugh at what is written about him, that the government of the city depends on him, he having never intermeddled with it, nor has he ever had the least communication about it, with any other citizen.' And in another letter of March 30, 1496, they say: We are much surprised at what you have been hearing; it is all fable and fiction of some one seeking to bring some charge against him, and do him harm.' *Archivio delle Riformagioni*.

him. The chief merit of this tract consists in its giving a clear and precise compendium, intelligible to everyone, of the principal Catholic dogmas. And although this be no more than the merit of form and order, still it does great honour to Savonarola; for earlier than any other writer, he freed theology from that load of scholastic apparatus with which so many, even in the present day, encumber it; and by this he paved the way to its being understood by all. We shall have to repeat this commendation on another occasion, with reference to a much more important work, of which the treatise in question may be considered to have been the first draft, and which we now only notice in passing.

The author published it nearly at the same time in Latin, and in an Italian translation by Girolamo Benivieni; * giving, with the latter, a preface, in which he declared anew his submission to the authority of the Roman Church, and that he wrote it solely 'to combat the infidelity of the time, in which all charity has cooled, and no sign of good works is anywhere to be seen.' The first book in the treatise deals alone with what may properly be called doctrine. He begins by insisting on the necessity of good works; he then proceeds to describe the Christian life, saying, that

* This treatise must have been completed, and must have been in type, in January 1496; for on the 10th of that month he sent the first proofs of it to the Duke of Ferrara, begging him to keep them private, as he wished to consider them again carefully before publication. In fact the treatise was not published until nearly the end of that year. The letter to the Duke that accompanied the proofs, is dated January 10, 1496. Count Capponi, when he published it in his beautiful and valuable collection, *Alcune Lettere del Savonarola* (Firenze 1858), thought that it was dated according to the old Florentine style, and therefore believed it to have been written in 1497. But that is not possible, because he therein speaks of the *Trattato della Semplicità* as not yet published, which we know to have been at the end of September 1496. When Savonarola wrote letters to persons not living in Tuscany he generally did not follow the Florentine reckoning, as may be seen in other letters.

its foundation and root is entirely the grace of God. He defines what grace is, and concludes, that it is to this the Christian ought to direct his whole mind; for without it, good works will have no value. In the same book he discourses at length on that state of Divine ecstasy, which was an offspring of the neo-Platonic doctrine, for which Savonarola had so great a predilection. He concludes by saying, that although in this state of ecstasy good works are almost useless, yet the Christian can never arrive at a vision of God unless he shall have first largely abounded in charity. He then goes on to treat of ceremonies and sacrifices, with regard to which he adopts entirely the doctrine of St. Thomas Aquinas. He notices the differences between the sacrifices according to the Mosaic and the Christian law, observing, that the first operated solely as means, and according to the disposition of him who offered them; whereas the second instil grace by their intrinsic virtue. He in this way concludes the first book, which is the principal part of the treatise. The others consist rather of moral precepts. He dwells upon singleness of heart, or simplicity in our actions, our dress, and so forth; and finishes with a description of the supreme felicity of a truly Christian life. This work was read with great avidity; was many times republished;* and must have had great effect in re-

* It was printed in Latin at Florence, *anno Domini* 1496, *quinto Kalendas Septembris*, by Pietro Pacini, the same who published the Italian translation on the last day of October, in the same year. There is a reprint in the quattrociento S. L. A., and other editions in Florence, 1529; Venice, 1547; Paris, 1511; Cologne, 1550; Leyden, 1633; Grenoble, 1677. Father Philip Chant, a Jesuit, translated it into French, and published it in Paris, in 1672. Savonarola published the almost identical subject in two dialogues, which he entitled *Solatium Itineris Mei* (The Solace of my Journey). In the first of them he makes Sense and Reason discourse, but as the work became too diffuse and full of quotations, he left it incomplete, to recommence it in a more simple form, and one better adapted to the people for whom it was intended. In the second compilation, Soul and Spirit discourse, their subjects being a future state

futing that charge of heresy, under which the Court of Rome intended to conceal its political aim.

In the same year, he published an exposition of the psalm *Qui regis Israel*; * in which he entreats the Lord to come to the help of the age which has fallen so low. 'All religion,' he said, 'has now disappeared; and people's habits are to go one day to the theatre, the next to the episcopal cathedral; to-day to the theatre, and to-morrow to the choir of the canons; to-day a soldier, to-morrow a priest.' In the exposition of the psalm he meets with the word *aper* (wild boar), and stops to notice the habits of that animal, to find in each of them a corresponding vice in the priests of his time; and then, turning again to the Lord, he exclaims—'Show us at length thy countenance, thy light, and thy truth.'† While Savonarola was always submissive to dogmas, he was ever bold—we may rather say audacious—in matters of discipline; and such we find him to be to the last hour of his existence.

In the month of May he again mounted the pulpit, to preach in the festivals upon Ruth and Micah. His sermons were this time at distant intervals, and were then very long; sometimes he ceased for some weeks, or a month, and then preached in the Duomo several hours at

and Jesus Christ: they refute the Jews, and finally speak of the way to the celestial regions, hence the title of the book. These two small works were published at Venice after the author's death, in Italian in 1535, in Latin in 1536. As Savonarola's object in these writings had chiefly been to make them useful to the people, he represents the same ideas under an infinity of different forms, so as better to impress them on the mind of the reader, and to make them find their way into all classes of society.

* 'Hear, O thou shepherd of Israel, thou that leadest Joseph like a sheep.'—Psalm 80, in the English version.—TR.

† *Expositio Fratris Hieronymi Savonarolæ, Psalmi lxxix. : Qui Regis Israel, &c. Florentiæ, anno salutis 1496. IV. Kalendas Maii.* At Modena in the same year; a new edition in Florence, S. L. A. On the same day, June 8, 1496, two other Italian editions appeared in Florence; again one in 1509, in Lugano 1540, in Tübingen 1621.

a time. He thus hoped to avoid giving cause to Borgia for making frequent complaints; and, on the other hand, to keep the people alive to his doctrine and love of liberty. 'Here we are still, and have not fled, as many have predicted. The principal reason which has induced us to come is, that we may refute our enemies; and we have also remarked that, from the want of water from the pulpit, everything has been dried up, and our numbers have fallen off. I will say further, that I cannot exist without preaching; and, as a conclusive reason, I am come in obedience to Him, who is Prelate of prelates and Pope of popes.' In these sermons Savonarola explained 'how the Spirit of the Lord had descended upon the priesthood by means of the saints, and, through the priests, was spread among the whole people;' but now, the corruption of the clergy prevents the Spirit from spreading among the faithful. 'Nothing, therefore, remains for us but to implore God to come to our assistance; that He will send a scourge, which, by correcting the Church, may re-open the way to a wide diffusion of grace and of the Spirit.' On the 23rd of May he invoked the descent of the Holy Spirit with words so earnest and impassioned, that the audience burst into tears. On the following day, resuming the same subject, he said: 'As the stars, by their conjunctions, produce different effects upon the earth, so the prelates, who ought to be the stars of the Church, give rise to vice or virtue, according as they themselves are good or bad. When they are corrupt, the whole Church, the whole of Christianity, is corrupted. The good are then involved in a terrible warfare; for they are bound to obey, inasmuch as all superior power is derived from God; still they ought not to render obedience to commands that are contrary to the laws of the Lord. Great, therefore, must be the tribulations, great the warfare, when Christian princes

are wicked, still more so when temporal power is united with spiritual. Then the grievance becomes intolerable, and yet submission is necessary, for *the Lord desires not to change authorities*. They have a double power, the spiritual and the temporal, and the one or the other is made use of in defence of evil. How then is it possible to live a good life? Yet no one seems to have any fear of doing so. Far happier were those who lived in the time of the Apostles, for they had to contend only with an authority they were not bound to respect. What then is to be done in our day? We must wait for the coming of the scourge. Then, turning to the priesthood, he said, 'The Lord said unto you, "I am the gate, and he who does not enter in by this gate is a robber." Thou, prelate, who buyest benefices art a robber; thou, father, who buyest them for thy sons, art a robber; I tell thee, sell not spiritual things; you received them without a price, and without a price should they be given. Who then will follow after that to which he has been called by the Lord? who will be clothed with simplicity, and give up everything for the Church? O ye Prelates! O ye Chiefs of Italy! Come forth, and say, will ye have this woman? Whereupon they answer, *I give up my rights of propinquity*; they deprive themselves of their advantages, and treat them with indifference.

'Be then my witnesses, that I have unceasingly called upon them these last six years, or rather Christ has called upon them through me, and they would not come, and have renounced their rights. Strip them, therefore, of their benefices, O Lord! Take everything away from them. The sword, the sword—that must be the remedy for all. I warn thee, O Italy, I warn thee, O Rome, that nothing can save thee unless it be through Christ. The time is not yet come for sending the Holy Spirit, but it will come in its proper time,

and then, O Lord, thou wilt receive praise for ever and ever.' *

In this way he finished the first sermon, and delivered the rest in much the same strain, at short intervals, until the 20th of August, 1496. On that day, at the request of the Signory, he preached before all the magistrates and principal citizens assembled in the hall of the Consiglio Maggiore. The place suggested politics, and after giving a general account of his past life, he took occasion to repel the numerous charges against him that were in circulation:—‘The clergy do wrong in making complaints of me. If I have condemned vices, I have not given offence to any one individual. But much more are those citizens in the wrong who go about saying, that I interfere in the affairs of State. I have never once intermeddled with any of your transactions; I have said both publicly and in private, and I now repeat it in this place, that such is no part of my duty, and if I did show any desire to interfere, no one ought to listen to me. If I have brought forward new laws for the good of the people and for the sake of their liberty, if I have prevented quarrels, have calmed people’s minds, that was done for the honour of God; and they, therefore, should stone me for good works. People go about crying—The Friar wants money, the Friar has secret correspondence, the Friar wishes for a cardinal’s hat. I tell you that if such were the case, you would not have seen me with a ragged cloak. I wish to glorify myself in no other way than in Thee, O my Lord. I wish neither for mitre nor hat, I only wish for that which thou hast bestowed upon the saints—death; a red hat, a hat red with blood; that I do wish for. But I tell you that if you do not provide against these

* Sermon 1. See the Sermons on Ruth and Micah, delivered on the festival days in the year 1496, after the termination of Lent. Firenze, 1497; Venice, 1614, 1639, 1543.

murmurings, calamities will fall upon your city.' After this introduction, he directed his discourse to offering advice as to the best way of firmly maintaining the new Government. And this was what he advised: that the Consiglio Maggiore should grant full liberty of discussion, to allow everyone to say what he wished, but at the same time to pass a law to punish those severely who should be guilty of slander. 'When the citizens are assembled, there can be no good discussion unless a man can speak out all that is in his mind; leave then everyone to exercise his discretion. O Father, there are many in whom we can put no trust.—Let not that trouble you; let them speak; their manner of life will always afford the means of knowing their true character. Seethat no one shall dare, under a severe penalty, to speak evil of that which has been said in the Council. If anyone says that which is displeasing to you, do not return evil for evil, but answer him; if the mode of reasoning does not satisfy you, bring forward a better. But if you are distrustful of each other and be evil-tongued, discords and divisions must necessarily arise.'*

This sermon, delivered in the hall of the Consiglio Maggiore, in the presence of the united body of the magistracy, seems to carry us two years back, to those days full of life and success, in which the Friar founded the new Republic. We cannot fail to see that the condition of things in the Republic must have undergone a great change. In fact, the late events in Italy had created new changes on every side, and all, in their state of alarm, turned to that Friar who alone had proved himself their safeguard in times of difficulty; and although he had hitherto been only repaid by much ingratitude, he again came forward to labour in the defence of the country; but, as we shall see, to experience greater and more cruel ingratitude.

* Sermons on Ruth and Micah—that on August 20.

CHAPTER V.

EMBARRASMENTS OF THE REPUBLIC, AND REVERSES IN THE WAR AGAINST PISA—DEATH OF PIERO CAPPONI—THREATENINGS OF THE ALLIED POWERS, WHO HAVE INVITED THE EMPEROR MAXIMILIAN INTO ITALY—NEW BRIEFS OF THE POPE AGAINST SAVONAROLA, AND HIS ANSWERS—THE REPUBLIC BESIEGED IN LEGHORN BY THE IMPERIALISTS AND THE ALLIES—IN THE MEAN-TIME, SAVONAROLA RETURNS TO THE PULPIT—THE REPUBLIC ESCAPES MIRACULOUSLY FROM GREAT DANGERS.

[1496.]

THE tumultuary changes of the preceding years had given a check to the commerce and industry of Florence: the sums paid to the King of France and the expenses of the war were enormous and incessant; public credit had gone on lowering to such an extent, that notes of the National Bank* for 100 florins could not be sold for more than ten.† For the last two years, the Signory

* Although, by the new law, the citizens were not bound to pay more than a tenth part of their annual income, the books of the Decrees passed from 1494 to 1498 are full of continual new taxes of 10 per cent. laid on by the Signory. See the *Archivio delle Riformazioni*.

† The Fiorino struck in Florence was so called from having upon it the *Giglio fiore* (the flower of the lily), the emblem of the city. It was originally the eighth part of an ounce, that is a drachm. It had various proportions of alloy at different times, which received particular denominations. The Fiorino largo, coined in ancient gold, was that most free of alloy.

In 1496, the Fiorino d'oro was worth 6 lire, and 14 soldi. The lira was, and is, a silver coin—what its value in 1496 was, I have not seen stated. It contained 20 soldi. As the Tuscan lira now is worth no more than eightpence English, it must have been greatly depreciated since the above period.—See Vettori, *Il Fiorino antico illustrato*, Firenze 1738—and Murray's Handbook for Florence, p. 522.—Tr.

had almost every month called a meeting of the Consiglio Maggiore, to ask for more money, and to lay on new taxes;* and the finances of the Republic, as well as of private persons, were then well nigh exhausted. To this a famine was now added, by which the country round was cruelly afflicted by cries of hunger; and the peasantry flocked into Florence, from which the old law would have expelled them as strangers, but, by the new law, they were received as brethren. There was a long discussion of the question; but the opinion of the followers of Savonarola prevailed, and they opened their houses to as many as they could contain.† But this only added to the poverty of the city. The haggard and worn faces of these peasants increased the general sadness, and the plague began to carry off some victims.

But events not less disastrous were passing in the camp before Pisa, which, from want of money and provisions, was daily thinned. They had very often the vexation of seeing some one of the officers of their mercenaries going over to the enemy for the sake of better pay; and the Pisans were constantly getting reinforcements, from the rivalry between The Moor and the Venetians to obtain a firmer footing in that city. Thus, while the Florentines saw the enemy before them daily increasing in numbers and strength, they had to meet a new enemy in their rear. The peasantry, who had seen their country laid waste by two years of war, now felt the further oppression of famine; so that they were rendered furious by starvation, and, in a state of insurrection, assaulted the camp of the Florentines in such

* Nardi, *Storia di Firenze*, p. 104.

† Nardi, *Storia di Firenze*, Burlamacchi, &c. Savonarola in a letter to his brother Albert (July 24, 1497), says: 'More die of a pestilential fever than of the true plague.' We shall see afterwards what it was the writers of the time sometimes called *moria* and sometimes *peste*.

numbers, and with such violence, that it cost some hours of hard fighting before they could be repulsed.

The Pisans, taking advantage of this state of things, led by Gian Paolo Manfroni, made a general assault on their enemy. Both sides fought with great valour, but the Florentines were compelled to abandon all the forts they occupied in the plain, and retreat to the high ground. About the middle of September they were attacked a second time, and were forced to leave their position on the hills; and thus they lost all the advantages they had gained. The enemy now advanced with increased courage, with the view of cutting off the communication between Florence and Leghorn, and, had they succeeded, the ruin of the Republic would have been inevitable, for that was the only channel through which they could receive the supplies of wheat of which they stood so much in need.*

But among many disasters, no one appeared so great, no one caused such universal grief, as the death of the brave and generous citizen Piero Capponi, which occurred during the last of these unfortunate encounters. He had undertaken the siege of the Castle of Soiana, to retake it from the enemy; and, as was usual with him, he was acting on this occasion both as common soldier and commander; and while planting a gun near the wall he was mortally wounded by a ball.† Only the preceding day, when the larger of their two guns happened to burst, he said it was a bad omen, and predicted his own death; so strong was this impression, that he wrote what had happened to the Friar Salvestro Maruffi, his con-

* Guicciardini, Nardi, Sismondi.

† See the *Life of Capponi*, by Acciaiuoli, already often quoted, in the second part of the fourth volume of the *Archivio Storico*. This volume, to which the eminent writers Aiazzi, Monzani and Polidori, contributed, is the second of the Lives of illustrious Italians, and is among the most important of the *Archivio*.

fessor, asking him to recommend his soul to God.* It is hardly credible how great an alarm the news spread in the city and in the camp. The soldiers fled as if terror-struck, and raised the siege of Soiana.† At Florence a splendid funeral, at the public expense, was immediately ordered, and there never was seen so universal a lamentation for the death of a private citizen. His body was brought up the Arno in a funeral barge, and was deposited in his own house in Florence, near the bridge of the Santa Trinita, from whence it was taken to the Church of the Santo Spirito, accompanied by the magistrates and a vast multitude of the citizens. The church was lighted up by innumerable tapers, and in four ranges of banners the arms of the magistracy alternated with those of the family. A funeral oration was delivered over the coffin, proclaiming with the highest praise the distinguished life of the deceased, and the deep sorrow felt for the loss of the valiant soldier and eminent citizen. His remains were then deposited in the same tomb which his grandfather Neri had caused to be constructed for his illustrious great-grandfather, Gino Capponi.‡

Adverse fortune was not yet tired of oppressing the Republic. The allies, on seeing the many disasters which Florence was enduring, hemmed her in on every side, in order to try to induce her to give up her friendship with France, and to join the League, which they designated *Holy*. Nothing more was said about Piero de' Medici, as they knew the intense hatred in which he was held; on the contrary, they promised to support the liberal Government, and to assist them to subjugate Pisa; and they threatened immediate war if their proposal should be

* Machiavelli, *Estratto di Lettere ai Dieci di Balla*.

† Acciaiuoli, Sismondi, &c.

‡ See Acciaiuoli, *Vita di Capponi*; Giovanni Cambi, in his history, on September 25, 1496.

rejected. The Arrabbiati were in their favour, but the rest of the people were universally opposed to them, for they clearly perceived that it was only the beginning of a design to change the Government,* and they knew full well that no reliance was to be placed on the words of the League, who were profuse in promises, which were never performed. Moreover, King Charles was again talking of a descent upon Italy, and had already made some preparations for it; and therefore the Republic resolved to remain firm to their connection with France.

The rumour of the return of the French caused great alarm to the Moor. He who boasted of being the pacificator of Italy, and who was, in fact, the author of all the disturbances that resulted from his intervention, was alarmed by every change of the wind, and was in constant dread of losing his usurped sovereignty. We therefore find him again at work, planning new treaties and alliances, and calling in new strangers. He had for some time been on good terms with the Emperor Maximilian, who had married one of his nieces, and who had conceded to him the investiture of the dukedom of Milan as a fief of the empire. He thought, therefore, to invite him into Italy, to take the iron crown, to re-establish the authority of the empire there, to become the arbitrator in the numerous disputes between the different states, and to restore order. The mere name of the Emperor, he believed, would prevent the descent of the French, and that, as Maximilian was so badly provided with men and money, he would be under subjection to himself, who could supply him with both. The Moor imagined that he knew so well to manage the affair that

* 'From which there was much trouble and murmuring of the people, who were universally opposed to any alienation from his majesty the King; and especially entertaining great doubts whether some wicked citizens might not secretly, by means of the League, bring about some change in the present government of the Republic.'—Nardi, *Storia*, p. 99.

he could invite the Emperor in the name of the whole League, with a promise of 40,000 ducats, of which 16,000 were to be paid by the Venetians, the same amount by himself, and 8,000 by the Pope; all this, however, on the condition that Maximilian should come with an army capable of producing some great effect.*

But in the midst of all this it became known that Charles had given up all thoughts of returning to Italy. He was in expectation of immediately being again a father, and giving himself up to that anticipated happiness, he abandoned all thoughts of Italy. A dauphin was born in September, but only lived a month; a loss which threw the King into such a state of melancholy that he neglected to send any succour to the small remnants of his army that were still in the kingdom of Naples, unprovided with everything, surrounded by the enemy on every side, and nearly falling into his power.† The effect produced by the news was very various in Italy. In Florence the death of the dauphin appeared to be another fulfilment of the prophecies of Savonarola. The abandonment by Charles of his designs upon Italy suddenly cooled the allies in their invitation to the Emperor, and they almost receded from their promises. Not so, however, The Moor; he not only remained firm to his plans, but rather instigated the Emperor with more earnestness to put his troops in motion, hoping to be able to manage him at his own pleasure, now that he alone was to aid him. While Maximilian was advancing, the Pope took courage from the new state of things, and without loss of time set about his designs upon the Republic. His troops, which were joined by

* Sismondi, *Hist. des Répub. Italiennes*; Guicciardini says, that the Emperor was promised 60,000 ducats. So great was the distrust the Florentines had of the league, that Nardi says it was 'to that degree, that it was publicly said that their country would have been divided by agreement between the said allied powers.'—*Storia*, p. 97.

† Nardi, Guicciardini, Sismondi.

those of Siena, had advanced to the bridge of Valiano, and endeavoured to force their way within the Florentine territory. They were, however, driven back several times, and were obliged to retreat and take refuge in Montepulciano. But the Florentines, although victorious, had been obliged, by the necessity of this defence, to weaken their force before Pisa, while it was in the sad condition we have described above, and while the movements of the Emperor and The Moor gave them reason to fear a new attack from that quarter.*

The Emperor had crossed the Alps; but his army was so small, that, as if ashamed of himself, he avoided passing by Milan, where the Duke had prepared a grand reception for him. He took, instead, the road to Genoa; and from thence, on the 8th of October, he set sail with six Venetian galleys and some small Genoese vessels. He disembarked at La Spezzia; from whence he went by land, and entered Pisa with 100 cavalry and 1,500 infantry. The Pisans received him with the utmost joy; they hastened to the bridge over the Arno, and threw the statue of Charles into the river, to be replaced by one of the Emperor; and they lodged him splendidly. They were full of hope, having men, money, good officers, and plenty of provisions, and new reinforcements arriving from all quarters; and now they had the name and authority of the Emperor in their favour, which they were willing to accept as a proof of fortune being on their side.

Everything was the reverse with the Florentines, who had neither men nor fortune in their favour; nevertheless, the energy with which they helped themselves in this adversity was quite wonderful. They never lost courage; they collected all the men, money, and provisions they were able, and sent all off to the

* Nardi, Guicciardini, Sismondi.

camp. They wrote to their fellow-citizens, who were settled as merchants in France, calling upon them to aid their native land with their private means. These replied by raising troops and sending supplies of wheat; and, like good citizens, did everything in their power. Nor did the Signory stop there: for when they ascertained that the enemy were contemplating an attack on Leghorn, which was at that time the key to the Tuscan territory, they so nobly supplied it with all necessaries for holding out, that it was scarcely credible how, in such straitened circumstances, provisions so ample could have been made.* The first thought of the Signory had already been, as we have stated above, to have recourse to the Friar; urging him to come to infuse some spirit into the people, who were so much discouraged by the many dangers and the numerous enemies united against them, and who seemed to be incapable of making any effort without the stimulus of his sermons. Savonarola set to work with promptitude and goodwill; although, at that very time, he foresaw the great difficulty he should have in withstanding the fierce war which the Court of Rome had commenced against him.

Of all the enemies of the Republic, the Pope was unquestionably the most bitter. The Moor would have been satisfied, for the time, by seeing the Arrabbiati triumph in Florence; the Venetians were desirous of acquiring some authority in Pisa; but the Pope aimed at the entire destruction of the Republic, in order to replace the Medici there as his vassals, and open the way for his sons. Thus, while the allies were waiting for the arrival of the Emperor, the Pope, unable to restrain his impetuosity, advanced with his troops. Hatred of Savonarola was the principal thing which occupied the mind of Borgia; and

* Nardi, Sismondi.

he dreaded his return to the pulpit, well aware how he might defeat all the hopes he had indulged in from the approach of the Emperor. The Florentine people, led on anew by their Friar, and re-animated by the sound of his voice, might prove themselves capable of making a heroic defence. The Holy Father, therefore, determined to make use of all kinds of threats, flatteries, and promises, of everything of which he was capable, to prevent Savonarola from preaching, now that the people, and even the Signory itself, had implored him to return to the pulpit. The brief with which he commenced this new war was despatched from Rome on the 8th of September. It was directed to the Convent of St. Mark, and was similar to that which had been sent, in September of the preceding year, to the friars of Santa Croce. It spoke of one Frà Girolamo, a friend of novelties, and a disseminator of false doctrines.* ‘He’—thus runs the brief—‘has arrived, by these changes in the state of affairs in Italy, at such a degree of insanity, as to make himself believe that he has been sent by God, and has spoken with God; without the slightest proof, either by miracles, or by any special testimony to be found in the Scriptures, as the canonical laws would require. We have given proof of our great patience, hoping that he would repent, and amend his wayward course, by submission to us, and putting an end to the scandalous separation from the Lombard Congregation: a consent to which was extorted from us by deceitful artifices of some friars.’

* This brief has been published by Quetif, but with the wrong date of October 16, 1497. By that time Savonarola had been excommunicated. The year of this brief could be no other than 1496, as is proved by the letters of the Florentine ambassador; and has been correctly given by Meier. With regard to the day and the month, we have adopted that we have found in the Riccardian MS. 2053; because they alone will agree with the briefs which followed, and Savonarola's answers, with his sermons, and with the whole chronology of the facts narrated in this chapter.

It concluded by remitting the whole case to Frà Sebastiano de Madiis, Vicar-General of the Lombard Congregation, commanding Savonarola to acknowledge his authority, to proceed to whatever place the said vicar-general should appoint, and, in the meantime, to *abstain from all preaching, in public or in private*. The same brief re-united the Convent of St. Mark with the Lombard Congregation; and Frà Domenico, Frà Salvestro, and Frà Tommaso Bussino, were ordered to proceed within nine days to Bologna; all this under pain of excommunication *latæ sententiæ*.

The object of this brief was self-evident; the Holy Father wished above all things to silence the Friar, for it was now apparent to all that the war he had commenced against Savonarola was one of politics, and only a step in that which he was waging against the Republic; thus, by remitting the cause to others, and reducing it to a dispute as to the union or separation of convents, he sought to conceal the true character of his proceeding, and to render the Republic indifferent to it. If the Congregation of St. Mark were once dissolved, the authority of Savonarola would cease, and if, in obedience to the Lombard Superior, he were to leave the Tuscan territory, Borgia knew that he would be immediately in his power.*

Savonarola, who perfectly understood all this, at once resolved not to obey; but, in order to avoid making his position more difficult by exasperating the Pope to a still greater degree, he sent a very long answer, on the 29th of September.† He lamented that his

* 'The Pope was desirous to re-unite the Tuscan Congregation, as it had formerly been, with the general one of Lombardy, in order that the Friar might be got out of the city of Florence, and so annul his own congregation and that of his admirers and followers; and all this was brought about by the adversaries of the present Government, and especially by those whose object was that the city should turn to favour the League and the house of Medici.' Nardi, *Storia*, p. 124.

† *Responsio Fratris Hieronymi Savonarolæ ad Alexandrum Papam*

enemies had so succeeded in deceiving the Holy Father upon things that had taken place in the presence of the whole people. 'As to doctrine,' he said, 'I have always acted with submission to the Church; as to prophecy, I have never said absolutely that I am a prophet, although that would not have been heresy; but I have certainly predicted many things, some of which have come to pass, others will in time. It is known, besides, to all Italy, that the scourge has already commenced; and that by means of my words alone the peace of Florence was preserved, without which all the misfortunes would have been much greater.' He then reminds the Holy Father, that the brief of separation had not been extorted by a few friars, but had been obtained at the request of all, and after a long discussion. 'To remit our cause, therefore, to the decision of the Lombard Superior is to abandon us to our adversary, for the controversy between the two congregations is known to all. Whence then could all this have arisen, most Holy Father, but from the false accusations, the mendacious tales of the enemies of this Republic, which I have saved from so many dangers, which I have brought back to religion and liberty, putting an end to factions, correcting bad habits, and establishing peace? And, besides all this,' he continued, quoting in his support the authority of many doctors of the Church, 'it is allowed to everyone to pass from one rule to another more strict and severe. That is what we have done by our separation. To unite us to the Lombard brethren would

Sextum. Here again Quetif has given the erroneous date of October 27, 1497. Meier properly corrected the year to '96, and we correct the month also; because the brief sent by the Pope, in reply to this letter of Savonarola, as we shall presently show, is previous to October 29. In the Magliabechian codex, col. xxxiv, 34, and at the end of the first volume of the *Diario del Burcardo* (Magliabechian Cod. cl. iii. 153), this letter exists, having the date of September 29, and which we believe to be the right one, because it alone will agree with the answer of the Pope which follows.

only increase the rancour which unfortunately still exists between the two congregations, and give rise to fresh dissensions and new scandals. And finally, it being said that your Holiness is desirous of this union, to prevent others from falling into my errors; and it being now most clear that I had not fallen into such errors; the cause ceasing, the effect must cease. Having thus proved all the charges brought against me to be false, may your Holiness be pleased to grant an answer to this my defence, and an absolution. I preach the doctrine of sainted doctors; in nothing do I differ from them; and I am prepared, if I have committed any errors, not only to correct them, but to declare them and amend them before the whole people. And now I will repeat what I have always said, that I submit myself and all my writings to the correction of the Holy Roman Church.' He, at the same time, wrote several letters, directed to friends of some authority in Rome, repeating the same arguments he had laid before the Pope in favour of his cause, and recommending it most earnestly to all.

Alexander was too sagacious and too penetrating not to comprehend the difficulty of the case, and then resorted to a very cunning step, truly worthy of the former advocate of Barcelona. Seeing that the Friar was determined not to dissolve his congregation, nor to quit Florence, and that the moment was a very critical one in the fate of the Republic, he determined that the sole thing to be done at the time, was to prevent the Friar from preaching; he therefore laid aside his threats, and returned to blandishments. On the 16th of October another brief was dispatched,* in which

* This brief, according to Quetif, is dated October 16, 1497; Meier has properly corrected it to '96. Now as it is evident that it is a reply to the letter of Savonarola, that letter could not have had the date of October 27, nor could it have any other than September 29, as we have said

the Holy Father, in reply to Savonarola's letter, expressed his joy at the recovery of the lost sheep. 'We have,' he said, 'in other letters, manifested our grief for those tumults in Florence, of which thy sermons have been the chief cause; for, in place of preaching against vice and recommending union, you went on announcing future events, a thing sure to create discord among a peaceable people, especially that of Florence, where the seeds of discord and of faction are so thickly spread. For these reasons we called you to come near to us, but now that, by thy letters and by what many cardinals have said, we have learned that you are prepared to pay obedience to the Roman Church, we are thereby greatly rejoiced, and feel persuaded that thou hast erred more from an over-simplicity than from an evil mind. Therefore we now reply to thy letters, and we command thee that, in all holy obedience, *you abstain from all preaching, not only in public but in private*, so that it may not be said that thy church has been turned into a conventicle. To this course thou wilt adhere, so that thou mayst be able to come more securely, and with due decorum, into our presence, when we will receive thee with a paternal and joyful mind; or until we shall have maturely considered what other course thou oughtest to take, and have decided upon a fit person to put all these matters in order. And if, as we cannot doubt, it is thy desire to be obedient, we now suspend all antecedent briefs, so that you may attend in quiet to your spiritual health.'

Upon the receipt of this brief, Savonarola found

above. Besides, if this brief, which is so benignant to Savonarola as to promise a general absolution, is dated October 16, that directed to the Convent of St. Mark, threatening excommunication *latæ sententiæ*, should Savonarola not agree to the union with the Lombard Congregation, could not have the same date of year and day. Many have repeated the mistake of Quetif, and no one seems to have noticed the contradiction, which rendered the history of the contest of Savonarola with Rome quite inexplicable, so that it was impossible to comprehend either the briefs or the answers to them.

himself in a most difficult position. He thoroughly understood that all this paternal mildness was nothing more than a contrivance to shut his mouth at the moment when the Republic had the greatest need of him; that it was an instance of the habitual cunning of Borgia, now well known to everyone. Letters from the ambassador at Rome showed, in fact, that the anger of the Pope was more violent than ever; that his object was to lay hands on the person of the Friar. The advance of his army against the Republic—the manner in which he instigated the Emperor—the entire understanding between him and Piero de' Medici, who was residing at Rome, and was endeavouring to get up new conspiracies in Florence*—all placed it beyond doubt, that Borgia wished first to silence Savonarola, the better to enable him to oppress the Republic; after which, it would be an easy matter to destroy it. But how could Savonarola disobey a command apparently so just and benignant; a brief that offered him a general pardon on the sole condition of silence? Would not disobedience appear to many to arise from a wish to bring scandal on the Church, and render all conciliation impossible? Therefore, although he was not deaf to the voice of his country which called upon him, although aware of the great dangers that were accumulating around her, and although convinced that the pretended benignity of the Pope was nothing more than cunning, he yet wished to obey. In fact, from the receipt of the brief of the 8th of September, he had ceased to preach, and had continued firm to his purpose.†

* This will appear afterwards with the clearest evidence from new and important documents. Nardi says continually: 'the Pope desires to see any other form of government in our city except the present, and therefore he persecutes the Friar.'—p. 124.

† He ceased from September 11, before which day the brief of the 8th could not have arrived.

In a letter which he wrote to a friend on the 15th of September of this year, he showed clearly the state of his mind: 'It is known,' he said, 'to all the world, that the things of which I have been accused are false, and that they will bring infamy on those prelates, and the whole city of Rome. I know full well that they have no ground for proceeding against me; that they rather stone me for my good works; but I fear neither them nor their power; for I have the support of the grace of God, and a clear conscience. I know the root of all those insidious proceedings; I know that perverse citizens are the authors of them; those who wish to re-establish tyranny in Florence, and have entered into agreements with some of the potentates of Italy. All wish to kill me; so that I cannot walk out without a guard of armed people. Nevertheless, if I cannot otherwise satisfy my conscience, I will obey, rather than commit even a venial sin.'*

But while he thus kept silence, the affairs of the Republic were becoming, from day to day, rapidly worse. The Imperialists, joined by the Milanese, closely pushed on the siege of Leghorn with an army of 4,000 men. The Venetian ships kept possession of the sea and blockaded the port, while a detachment was posted at the bridge of Sacco, to prevent any communication between Leghorn and the Florentine camp before Pisa. The Florentines, in the meanwhile, provided for all their most urgent wants with a courage worthy of the olden time. They sent Antonio Cani-

* This letter is published by Perrens, from a copy obtained from the Abbé Bernardi. Perrens, from not having seen the Marcian manuscript in Venice, in which the letter, along with other documents relating to Savonarola, exists, thought that there must be some mistake in the copy he had, and changed the date of September 15, '96, to September 15, '95. But having examined not only the Latin MS. in the Marcian library at Venice (cl. ix, No. 41), but also that in the Riccardian library, No. 2053, where there is a copy of the same letter, and finding that both have the date September 15, 1496, we have adhered to it as correct.

giani to the camp at Pisa, to restore discipline in the army, which had fallen into disorder after the death of Capponi; and they gave orders to him to direct the troops stationed at Montopoli to hold themselves in readiness to march to whatever point the movements of the enemy might call them. Bettino Ricasoli, who had a high reputation for energy and military capacity,* commanded in Leghorn: and now the Dieci della Guerra sent 300 men there under Count Cecco, who, taking advantage of a dark night and a pouring rain, passed through the enemy, and got into the city. By this reinforcement, they were enabled to make a gallant sortie, in which the Imperialists were beaten. Under so many adverse circumstances, that which greatly favoured the Florentines, was not only the incapacity of the Emperor for command, but also that he found more hindrance than help in the Venetians and The Moor. They both wished to subjugate the Florentines; but they did not wish to raise up another power in Italy. They first goaded on the Emperor, and then stopped his progress; they would have him distress their enemy, but they would not give him an opportunity of satisfying his ambition, by signalling his coming into Italy by some great warlike achievement. Another source of disagreement between the Venetians and The Moor had also broken out; each not wishing the other to occupy Leghorn at the termination of the war.

For all these reasons, the Florentines had hitherto been able to hold out, not only without yielding to the enemy, but even sometimes beating them. This, however, could not long continue, for that which the hostile armies could not do, famine was beginning to effect. And, as if to deprive them of all hope, the

* The ancestor, with the same name, of the late distinguished President of the Council in the kingdom of Italy.—Tx.

efforts made by the Florentine merchants in France to succour their native country had wholly failed. They had engaged Count d'Albignon, with his mercenaries; and they had hired several ships, and loaded them with wheat; but just as the moment arrived for their departure, the Count refused to go to Italy; and the ships having soon encountered a violent storm, some of them returned to Marseilles, and others putting out to sea, went in different directions, in the hope of making a more profitable voyage. Even if they had arrived off Leghorn, they could not have entered the port, which was guarded by the Venetians.*

In Florence, the misery had increased to such an extent as words can hardly describe. Alarm for what was to happen could be read in the countenance of everyone; and in the faces of the populace were depicted the sufferings, the pains, of hunger. The peasants were often seen leaning against the walls by the roadside, fainting or dying from starvation.† The plague was making daily progress;‡ but to such a degree will men be blinded by the spirit of party, that the Arrabbiati appeared to triumph in this misery. They went about loudly proclaiming, 'Now at last we are all convinced how the Friar has been deceiving us: this is the felicity he promised to Florence,' and they already began to speak of surrendering; they did not spare open abuse of the new Government, declaring that the time had arrived to change it.

* Sismondi, Nardi, p. 105.

† In a manuscript in the Magliabechian library (cl. xxv. cod. 23), we find the following list of prices during the famine of 1497:—

Wheat, 5 lire and 10 soldi the staio.	Wine, 7 lire the soma.
Barley, 2 " 10 " do.	Fowls, 3 " the pair.
Oil, 24 " the soma.	

At that time there were 6 lire and 14 soldi in a gold florino largo. That florin would be represented by a modern Zecchino, but the value of gold was much higher in those days. See Vettori, *Il Fiorino antico illustrato*, Firenze, 1738.

‡ Nardi, pp. 104, 105 and 115. Edizione Arbib., Firenze.

The Signory, not knowing to what party they could apply, had recourse to religious observances, and ordered that the miraculous image of the Madonna dell' Impruneta should be brought in solemn procession into Florence: the people having always implored her intervention in their adversities. But they were fully convinced that the only probable comfort to the people in such an extremity would be the voice of Savonarola, whose silence had caused much grief and murmuring. The Signory, therefore, again turned to him, imploring, and almost insisting, that he should not be wanting in this duty to his country; and not allow a people who placed so much confidence in him, while they were surrounded by such dangers, and were in such misery, to remain without the comfort of at least listening to his words.

Savonarola, who had been long much affected by the alarms, the misery, and the desolation of the people, could not resist the renewed entreaties of the Signory, and on the 28th of October he at length returned to the pulpit. How different was the appearance of the audience which he now saw before him! On the faces of all could be seen the present misery and terror for the future. The end of the popular Government seemed to all to be near at hand; that the Arrabbiati would soon triumph, and that famine and war would be followed by condemnations and exiles. Full of uncertainty and apprehension, all eyes were, therefore, turned to the preacher. He began his sermon, as he had often done before, in the form of a dialogue—
 ‘I would not have come here, had it not been in obedience to the Signory, and once more to exhort you to repentance.—Is your mind clear?—I reply, that my mind is clear, and that all that has been foretold by us, even to the smallest iota, will come to pass. It is clear that God has disturbed the brains of the people of

Italy, and that many will be deceived. This scourge appears as one thing and will prove to be another.—Thou art clear, then? and of what?—That tribulations are near: that thou art contending with Christ. Know, that the good promised to Florence will come, and that the wicked will have the torments of hell both in this world and in the next. Be ye then convinced, that if you do not change your lives, you will have some disaster. Vices have not ceased, O Florence; you gamble, you blaspheme, and by these you bring down this scourge upon you. It is right that this procession should take place, “and if you turn to God as you ought, I feel assured that grace, in full measure, will be given to you, and that you ought not to fear anyone.”

‘But you always place your hope on man; you expect relief from that King who never comes, and who will suffer the punishment with which we have threatened him.* But I tell thee, *maledictus homo qui confidit in homine*.†—What then, father, ought we to do?—First of all, it is necessary that you return to God; next, that you lay aside the thoughts you have had of changing your Government, and of surrender; that you resort to all human means for aid; that you lend to the city, without interest, whatever money you can; finally, I tell you to be united, and to lay aside all dissensions. And if you form a true union, listen attentively to the words I now say to you—“I will stake my cloak that we shall drive our enemies away. I tell you that if you do what I have told you, I shall be the first to go forth against them with the crucifix in my hand, and we shall make our enemies fly as far as Pisa, and farther still.” Believe in my words, O Florence, remember the many tears shed in this church on the day of the 6th of November, and that on that same day the revo-

* Charles VIII. who had then lost his second and only son.

† ‘Cursed be the man that trusteth in man.’ Jeremiah, xvii. 5.—TR.

lution was accomplished, and you became free.* Remember that I caused King Charles to depart from Florence; and, on his return from Naples, I hastened almost in anger to his camp and threatened him, so that he did us no injury. Believe, therefore, in my words, and put your trust in the Lord. Happen what may, I have no fear; if you turn to God, if you are united, and if you provide all human means of defence.'

Then, turning his discourse to those who were murmuring against the new Government, he said: 'I have yet something more to say to you. You are citizens of three kinds; first, there are those who were banished by the old Government, and sighed in vain to return to their native land; now ye have had your desires, and therefore ought to be quiet. Next, there are those who had a halter round their necks; and now ye have security and liberty, and ought therefore to be contented.—I do not stir, father.—That is not quite true; you are all plotting, and I know what it is you want. Lastly, there are those citizens who are magistrates in this present Republic, and yet do not execute justice; for the city is full of gambling, blaspheming, luxuries, indecencies, and disunion. To them I say, if you do not execute the laws, the scourge will come upon you. Finally, I say to all, and I say it *in verbo Domini*, whosoever will have a tyrant will have to endure evil. Be then united, go forth in this procession, and put your trust in the Lord.'† Such was the discourse of Savonarola on that day; but, in fact, so long as the danger was imminent, such

* In the text it is—'nine days from this:' he was speaking on the 28th of October. He probably refers to the day on which he went to Pisa.

† *Predica del Reverendo Padre Frate Hieronymo da Ferrara*, delivered on the feast of St. Simon and St. Jude, October 8, 1496, as commissioned by the Signory of Florence, the city being then in the greatest terror of the arrival of the Emperor, S. L. A. This sermon forms one of those delivered on the festivals of 1496 upon Ruth and Micah.

words of blind confidence afforded the Arrabbiati an opportunity of turning both the Friar and his followers (the Frateschi) into ridicule. The people, however, derived great comfort from that which he had said to them, and so long as his voice sounded from the pulpit, it seemed as if Florence had no reason to fear any misfortune.

The miraculous image of the Madonna dell' Impruneta was brought into Florence on October 30, accompanied by a vast multitude; and the Florentines had never before exhibited a more sincere devotion. The people walked in sorrow and silence, alms were liberally given; sadness was depicted in every countenance, and in the faces of the humbler classes it was easy to see how much they had suffered from hunger, and how intense was their fear of still greater calamities. The procession had just reached the Porta Santa Maria as a messenger on horseback had arrived at the Porta San Frediano, and, crossing the bridge La Carraia, was proceeding by the Lung' Arno at a gallop, with an olive branch in his hand, making for the Palazzo of the Signory. But encountering the crowd, he was beset on all sides, his horse's bridle was laid hold of, all calling out: 'What news from Leghorn?' The long hoped-for supply of men and wheat had arrived there from Marseilles most unexpectedly, and as if by magic. The ships had been driven into Leghorn by a strong S.W. gale, and had scarcely been discovered on the sea when they entered the port; nor could the Venetians prevent them, for the same wind had forced them to run for shelter under the Meloria.* No words can adequately describe the frantic joy of the people. The messenger was accompanied by their deafening cries; his words passed from mouth to mouth, amplified and exaggerated. The

* A sandbank off Leghorn, on which there is now a lighthouse.

city was filled with the joyful tidings; the bells were set a ringing as on a holiday; and in all the churches solemn public thanks were offered up for the miraculous deliverance. In truth it appeared, even to the Arrabbiati, that it was the Lord's will that the Republic should be rescued from imminent ruin, and that Savonarola this time had undoubtedly proved a true prophet. His name and his authority increased a thousand fold, and the populace went about crying aloud, that the sermon of the Friar had this time been their salvation.

The succour did not, in truth, prove very great. Of the troops taken into pay by the merchants, not more than 600 would embark, and of the ships, already paid for, a part when they put to sea took different ways, in the hope of finding more profitable freights, instead of which they were wrecked, and hence the report had spread that no succour would be received. Not more than five ships and galleons entered the port with men, and having wheat on board. But the arrival was so unexpected, and the moment so opportune, that it produced the greatest effect, not only in Florence, but in Leghorn itself, inspiring so much hope that, in their joy and after a discharge of artillery, they made a sortie to attack the Pisans, and at the same time sent out from another side a reinforcement to the bastion at the bridge of Stagno, of which the enemy had nearly obtained possession. They there found the Imperialists so alarmed by the loud roar of their artillery, and by a report having spread among them with an exaggerated account of the reinforcements arrived, that they took to flight, having many killed, and leaving many prisoners, both of men and horses.

In the meanwhile, Savonarola had again appeared in the pulpit, on the 1st of November; and referring to their unexpected good fortune, he gave praises to God for His mercy, and dwelt upon the necessity of their

turning to religion, to the correction of their vices, to be constant in prayer, and to put their whole trust in the Lord. He endeavoured then to moderate the extravagant joy of the people. 'You ought not to allow yourselves to be so easily overcome either by joy or sorrow; you must not neglect to provide human means; and you must more than ever make preparations for war.' On Nov. 2, the anniversary for visiting the graves of lost relatives and friends (*Giorni dei Morti*), he delivered another sermon which had very great success, *on what we have to do to secure a tranquil death*.^{*} He said that a good Christian ought to have the idea of death ever present with him; and that a due consideration of it would conduce to our leading a good course of life. He described in vivid colours the state of our mind in that last hour, and he made an ingenious and minute analysis of all the passions with which we may be assailed in that time of trial. 'Death,' he said, 'is the most solemn moment of our existence; it is then that the devil has the last battle with us. It is as if he were playing a game at chess with us, and was watching the moment of death to give us checkmate. He who gets the better of him then has won the battle of life. My brethren, we live in this world but to learn how to have a happy death.' He advised everyone to have near his bed a picture that would remind him of the hour and the danger of death. He described minutely those fantastic pictures which had a great attraction for the people. In many editions of that sermon there are engravings of them by Sandro Botticelli and by other principal artists of the day. Nor did he omit on that occasion to give every encouragement to the people, exciting them to union,

^{*} These two sermons are included among these on Ruth and Micah; the second was several times printed separately, and Audin quotes three different editions in the quattrocento, all of which are illustrated by good engravings.

and to provide all that the defence of their country called for. After this sermon, he at once returned to his state of imposed silence, regretting that he had given the Pope fresh pretext for complaints.

No sooner did the news of the arrival of the succour to Leghorn, and of the Friar's first sermon, reach Rome, than the Pope instantly issued another brief, dated the 7th of November, and directed to all the Dominicans in Tuscany.* He had given up the idea of re-uniting St. Mark's to the Lombard Congregation, but resolved rather to continue the separation, in order to unite it and all the convents of Tuscany and Rome in one new congregation, to be called the Tusco-Romano Congregation, with a special vicar, who, in conformity with the statute of the Dominicans, should be elected every two years from among the different friars in the new congregation, but still subject to the authority of the vicar-general at Rome. The Pope nominated the Cardinal of Naples to be the vicar for the first two years, the same who had always been friendly to St. Mark's and to Savonarola. In this way Borgia, by again taking up the question of the convents, dexterously sought to avoid all reference to the objections stated by the Friar in his letter. He did not remit the case to the Lombard vicar; he did not re-unite the hostile congregations; but he himself appointed a vicar who had always been a friend of St. Mark's; and lastly, so said the brief, he gave an opportunity for the extension of the new reform over all Tuscany and the Roman States.†

* This brief, which has not been published, is in the Riccardian library, cod. 2053. It is a most important document, for Savonarola not paying obedience to it, was the chief cause of his excommunication, as, indeed, the brief itself declares. Its not having been known before has been the chief cause of the confusion of the chronology of all the other briefs, and consequently of Savonarola's answers.

† 'There then came a brief that all the convents of Tuscany should be united and form one congregation, including that of St. Mark's

But all this was only outward show, the real substance of what he was about was quite the reverse. By making Savonarola subject to the authority of a vicar who was dependent on the General of the Order in Rome, he would at once lose that independence which made him so anxious to maintain the separation from the Lombard friars, as well as that command over the friars in his own convent which gave him so much authority in Florence; and he might be obliged, at any time, to remove to some other convent, which in truth had been all along at the bottom of the designs of the Pope. Besides, he clearly saw that by entering into the new congregation, the Convent of St. Mark would be kept under restraint in the midst of a multitude of other convents, almost all of them either jealous or hostile; so that, so far from having the power to introduce the new reform, it would on the contrary be easily suppressed.

For all which reasons, in place of yielding obedience, Savonarola again took up his pen, and wrote his *Apology of the Congregation of St. Mark*; in which, not replying to the Pope, but addressing the public, he assumed a language at once frank and bold: 'I shall not stop,' he said, 'to refute the accusations made against me respecting doctrine, because I have so often replied to them, and because I am preparing to meet all of them in my work of the *Trionfo della Croce* (the Triumph of the Cross), which will very soon see the light. What I am now about to answer is the command given to me to unite with the new congre-

'with the rest. He first, in another brief, had desired that we should 'be re-united with the congregation of Lombardy, from which we had 'separated, and now he desires that we should unite with that of 'Tuscany; this day one thing, the next day another. This seems to me 'like a game of chess; when the King is to be defended, and when he is 'surrounded, you take him from off one square and bring him back to 'the same; evident signs of the circumventions of malignant persons.' Sermon on Sexagesima Sunday, February 8, 1498.

gation; and I have to say, in the first place, that this does not depend upon my authority alone, but also upon the will of 250 friars, all of whom have stated their objections in writings addressed to the Pope; and I cannot, and will not, oppose their views, which appear to me both just and honest.' He then brought forward his own reasons why such an union would corrupt and relax the severity of the rules of St. Mark, to the great injury of all, especially of the young friars, who now constituted the majority of the convent. 'If other friars have no need of reform, why unite them to us? If they are to be united for the sake of being reformed, we have already so many inexperienced young men, that all our exertions scarcely suffice for their instruction. To unite us with others, therefore, would only bring disorder and confusion upon all, and especially on ourselves.' 'Bear in mind the lamentable state of hatred existing among different convents; the danger of my life which on that account I incurred at Pisa and Siena.' In conclusion he observed — 'Such an union is impossible; it would be irrational and mischievous; and the friars of St. Mark ought not to be forced into it, because no Superior has power to issue a command contrary to the constitution of the Order, contrary to charity, and the good of souls. We must, therefore, suppose that the proposal has been made through false, deceitful information, and is to be received as a command contrary to charity. We must not allow ourselves to be terrified by threats or excommunications, but expose ourselves to death rather than submit to that which would be poison and perdition to our souls. When our conscience repudiates a command received from our Superior, we must first resist, and humbly try to have it corrected; that we have already done; but should that not avail, we must

then do as St. Paul did, *qui coram omnibus restitit in faciem Petri.** In this way, after a very short time, Savonarola found himself again at open war with the Pope.†

Meanwhile, after the first success obtained by the unexpected succour, matters at Leghorn became worse; and, had it not been for the constant jealousy between The Moor and the Venetians, the siege would speedily have come to an end. But it seemed as if Providence had come a second time to the relief of the Florentines. The same south-west winds, which, at the end of October, had carried the ships from Marseilles into Leghorn, began, about the 15th of November, to blow with such fury, that they drove the whole Venetian armament ashore. The admiral's ship struck broadside against the Rocca Nuova, when both men and guns were lost; and it was with difficulty that the Emperor himself, who was on board, could be saved. Two more ships met with the same fate; and the rest were so shattered as to be unserviceable. All the people who were wrecked surrendered, to save their lives; so that on that day many prisoners were made, and many in Leghorn were in a few hours greatly enriched by the booty.‡ The Emperor, at last, worn out, as he said himself, with fighting with both God and man, abandoned, with little honour, the enterprise he had begun, and which he had conducted with so little judgement.§ Nor would he give any reason for this sudden resolution, nor speak on the subject until his arrival in Lombardy, when he complained bitterly of the conduct of the Duke

* 'But when Peter was come to Antioch, I withstood him to the face, because he was to be blamed.' Epistle to the Galatians, ii. 11.—Tr.

† *Apologeticum Fratrum Congregationis S. Marci de Florentia*. It was reprinted by Quetif. In this tract, all the reasons for and against the union are minutely analysed.

‡ Nardi, Sismondi, Guicciardini, Machiavelli.

§ Idem.

and of the Venetians. Adverse fortune attended him to the last; for in his retreat, a considerable number of his German troops, who had united with a body of Pisans, to assault the castle of Lari, were driven by the Florentine commissioner, Alessandro degli Alessandri, who held it, into the ditch by his artillery, and the greater part of them were slain. Thus, between October and November, the fortune of the Florentines took a favourable turn, and they were saved, almost miraculously, from the most imminent danger.

Savonarola returned to the pulpit on the 26th of November. He then brought before his audience the perils through which they had passed, and the discouragement to which they had abandoned themselves; he impressed upon them the infinite mercy by which they had been saved, and recommended all to offer up thanksgivings to the Lord with true and heartfelt gratitude. He proceeded to describe anew the history of the popular Government, eulogising it, and again comparing it, in the various steps of its progress, to the seven days of Creation. He dwelt upon his prophetic light, and promised to return to preach during the following Advent.

And he did return accordingly, and delivered the first of eight sermons on Ezekiel; in which may be traced how entirely he had lost all hope of any truce or reconciliation with Borgia: ‘O Lord, I ask Thee to show me the way of adversity. I have this day begun again to preach, solely to repeat that which I have said until now, and to confirm it anew, and for which I am willing to lay down my life. If I retract,’ he continued, turning to the people, ‘then say that I act in opposition to God, and that I lie in the throat; then drive me from this pulpit and stone me.’ He resumed the subject of his prophetic light; confirmed his conviction that scourges were at hand; ‘the which will be so much greater, in

proportion as you continue less faithful to religion and liberty.*

The sixth was the most important of all the eight sermons—that which he preached on the 13th of December, in the Duomo, at the request of the Signory, who were present. After an introduction, which he was in the habit of giving each time, upon the mercy and goodness of the Lord, he enumerated the blessings which He had conferred on Florence: ‘This is Thy city; Thou hast elected it, O Lord, and hast blessed it; Thou hast given it light to lead a good life; Thou hast instilled faith and Thy light into the soul of this people. After heavenly gifts, it has been Thy will to give it also those which are temporal; “and the first and greatest of all, is the liberty Thou hast restored to it. This is “ a blessing of the greatest magnitude, *quia non bene pro toto libertas venditur auro* (for liberty is above all price). It was formerly necessary to obey what one man commanded; now, no such obligation exists. One man said—Do evil; and evil must be done. Another said—Give thy daughter in marriage to that man; and it was necessary to give her. Thy people endured stripes; and they were obliged to bear them with patience.”’ Continuing in this strain, he gave the whole story of the liberation of Florence, beginning with the expulsion of Piero de’ Medici, down to the departure of the Emperor, to show anew the goodness of the Lord to that people. He then endeavoured to rouse them to follow a good course of life, and reproved the coldness with which everyone went daily to hear a sermon, without ever putting in practice the things he was told to do. ‘Preach to those people as much as

* *Prediche sopra Ezechielle*; Venezia, 1520. The first eight were delivered in Advent 1496, the four others in Lent, ’97. See the first sermon. These sermons, although said to have been taken down by Violi, are among the least complete of all that have been published.

‘ you will; they have got one habit of listening well, and
 ‘ another of doing that which is evil. This habit has be-
 ‘ come a second nature, and they have thus got into the
 ‘ way of hearing, and not doing. And thus it is as diffi-
 ‘ cult to turn them out of that way, as it is to divert the
 ‘ course of a river. Thou hast got into the habit of al-
 ‘ ways hearing, execute justice—justice! Thou art like
 ‘ the rook in the steeple, which, when it first hears the
 ‘ sound of the bell, is struck with fear and alarm; but,
 ‘ after a little while, acquires the habit of listening; and
 ‘ you may sound as loud as you please: there it sits,
 ‘ on the steeple, and never moves.’

He reproached the people for their ingratitude to God, ‘ who has given you liberty, which you are always spoiling by continual murmurs, and speaking ill of, by continual conspiracies within and without the city. Ungrateful people! God has given you the great council, and you try to injure it by bringing into it the enemies of their country. What you have done was never intended by me. At first I was for allowing all to be admitted into the council, because liberty was then new, and experiment was necessary; but I never thought of allowing the wicked to enter it, as you have since done. Magnificent Signory, I tell you that you must keep your eye upon that council, and go on applying remedies to defects, and see whether there be not many in it whom it is not good to have there. It would be well to keep up the full number, and only to assign a limit in order to drive out of it the enemies of the country. I do not at all agree with those who would abstain from voting until this new reform is effected, and still less do I approve of those who would have the magistrates elected by lot. That is contrary to liberty. “I tell thee, thou art a bad Christian. “Go read the history written by Lionardo d’Arezzo, “where it is said that all went on well in that city so

“ long as they ruled their affairs without choosing by lot, which was afterwards changed by ambitious men. And there will always be found wicked men who go about whispering such things in your ears. These are the men who form secret clubs against the city, both within and without it, with priests and monks, who give fine dinners and suppers, whose whole talk is continually against the Friar ; for, whether they be eating or drinking, the Friar is always in their minds.” Look, then, O Florence, to those clubs, the only object of which is to ruin your liberty. That poor Friar has to fight alone against all the world. As to myself, I say to you, call in learned doctors, prelates, whomsoever you like ; I am ready to take the field against all of them. I now declare before you, that in the religious Order of St. Domenick there never has been a heretic, but certainly many have introduced great reforms into Italy. You must remember Cardinal Latino, Angelo Acciaïoli and Santo Antonino. And so it must be the case now. But, above all things, execute justice and be severe. It belongs to you, Signory, to take precautions ; provide an escort of armed men, and lay your hands upon your swords ; if that be not sufficient, call the people together, and show them that you are to be feared. Let those magistrates who do not punish crimes suffer the penalty of the guilty person. Justice then, Magnificent Signory ; justice, Signori Otto ; justice, magistrates of Florence ; justice, men and women ; let every one call out for justice.*

Thus concluded the year 1496. The Florentine Republic had marvellously escaped from an infinite number of dangers ; the name and authority of Savonarola had risen to the highest pitch ; the popular party were once more masters of the field. But, at the same time,

* The sixth sermon on Ezekiel.

the strife with Rome had been greatly exasperated, and the hatred of the Pope for the Friar, and for the Government he had created, seemed to have become extinguishable. Besides all this, so many enemies had been found to exist in the very heart of the Republic itself, and so flagrant and frequent were the plots of the Arrabbiati and the Bigi, that Savonarola found it indispensable not only to advise much severity, but even recommended the restriction to some extent of the course of proceeding in the Consiglio Maggiore: so that the Government should not fall into the hands of those whose whole thoughts were directed to its destruction; for they had used the indulgence hitherto shown to them in no other way than to conspire with more security against the liberties of their country.

CHAPTER VI.

FRANCESCO VALORI, ELECTED GONFALONIERE, PROPOSES NEW LAWS—THE CARNIVAL CELEBRATED BY A BONFIRE OF VANITIES—THE FRIARS OF ST. MARK'S PURCHASE THE MEDICEAN LIBRARY—IDEAS OF SAVONAROLA ON THE BEAUTIFUL: HIS DEFENCE OF POETRY; HIS OWN POETICAL COMPOSITIONS.

[1497.]

IN February, 1497, the popular party having gained the ascendancy by the events of the preceding year, elected Francesco Valori to be Gonfaloniere di Giustizia, with a Signory entirely devoted to him. If he had been more temperate in disposition, and less ardent in his passions, the time had perhaps arrived when a check might have been given to the Arrabbiati and the Bigi. But Valori was always carried away by impetuosity, nor would he at this time listen to the advice of Savonarola, who suggested to him that some restriction of the Consiglio Maggiore was desirable, in order to exclude those from it who were conspiring against the Republic, and were wishing to increase the number of its members. Valori got a law passed that the age of qualification should be reduced from thirty to twenty-four years: security to the Republic was his object, that is, to make the people themselves more extensively and absolutely the governing power; but the effect proved to be quite the reverse; for the law opened the door of the council to the dissolute turbulent youth among the Arrabbiati, those who hated Savonarola most, because of the

new government and new habits of life which he brought about. By putting an end to balls and feastings, and by the destruction of the carnival, life to them had lost all its charm; consequently they were the principal authors of all the plots against the Friar. In order that they might act more in concert, they formed a society, of which they elected Dolfo Spini the head, who went about armed, got up quarrels, and were guilty of all sorts of violent proceedings; which procured them the name among the people of *Compagnacci* (wicked associates). The new law, by throwing open the Council to them, put a most powerful weapon into their hands, by which they knew full well how to profit, to the great damage of the Republic.*

Nor did Valori appear to see the danger; for about the same time he got the Signory to propose another equally improvident law. They named it the *Decima scalata* (tithe sliding scale), which was nothing else than that we now call *imposta progressiva* (a progressive tax). As was to be expected, it met with a violent opposition from the wealthy classes, and was no less eagerly supported by the popular party. Passions became heated as each party sought to bring forward arguments for or against the measure; and it is curious to see the same reasoning, the same speeches then, as, after four centuries, we hear in the present day.† The popular party argued — ‘that the fairness of a tax

* Jacopo Nardi, *Storia di Firenze*.

† *La Decima scalata in Firenze, nel 1497; da' manoscritti inediti di messer Francesco Guicciardini*. These are two long and interesting speeches, which the author supposes to have been made in the Consiglio Maggiore by a supporter and an opponent of the new law. We have in them a living picture of the character of the Florentine people, and of the kind of eloquence displayed. They could not, it is true, have been delivered in the Council, because, as we have already stated, there was no free discussion of any law proposed to them; they are therefore imaginary speeches, like many others given by Guicciardini; but they may be fairly considered as perfectly historical, inasmuch as they give a most true picture of the opinions of the two parties.

consisted in its pressing equally on all: that the new law did not even go far enough in that respect; for while a tenth diminishes the necessities of a poor man, three-tenths would only cut off the superfluities of the rich.* This country of ours,' they said, 'may be compared to a piece of cloth large enough to give to everyone a cloak; but it would be badly divided if one person were given as much as would make a cloak wide enough to wrap three times round him, and having besides a train a yard long to sweep the ground, leaving no more for other people than what would make a jacket.' They concluded with launching forth against the rich, and their superfluous expenses, and on the injury done by them to the city. The more moderate men of the opposite party replied that 'The right meaning of equality is this, that no one citizen shall have the power to oppress another, and that all are equal in the eye of the law: but to say that all must be alike in everything would be to reason with our eyes closed, and as if we wished to have all the apartments of a house on one floor, the effect of which would be to throw everything into such confusion as must end in the ruin not only of a city but of the whole world. You do not seem to perceive that such improvident laws must necessarily give rise to dissensions, create discord, and throw open the door for Piero de' Medici to come in.' Whether it was that by such reasoning the Signory were induced to withdraw the proposal, or that it was lost by a negative vote, certain it is that the law for the tithe sliding scale could not be passed; after this things went on much more smoothly.

During this time, Savonarola had kept in retirement in his cell, occupied with a revision of his work on the

* The proposed new law provided, that he who had five florins of daily income should pay one-tenth only, and that for every additional five, one-fourth of a tenth should be added to the ordinary tax, but that the maximum sum payable should not exceed three-tenths.

Triumph of the Cross, and in writing a great number of small treatises, which he was desirous to bring out, in order to spread his doctrine more widely, and to find supporters in the new contest with Rome, which now appeared inevitable. For these reasons, he handed over the charge of the spiritual affairs to Frà Domenico of Pescia, who was as fervent and active in religious matters as Valori was in politics. He was so blind a worshipper of his master, that he not only placed entire faith in his prophecies, but held him capable of performing any miracle; and he would joyfully have laid down his life to maintain whatever had fallen from his lips. He was, unfortunately, often betrayed by excess of zeal and over credulity into proceedings of great danger.

Such was the condition of men's minds, and such the state of things, when the time of the carnival approached; and the Arrabbiati were prepared to promote the resumption of the ancient orgies, the scandalous feasts of the Medici, and especially the game of stones, which they knew to be a particular favourite with the populace. All this roused the indignation of Frà Domenico, and he set to work with a most determined opposition. He preached daily; addressed letters to the children;* and, supported by new ordinances of the Signory, he enforced the reforms which Savonarola had introduced among them in the preceding year.†

The children being now collected and under the

* Burlamacchi says expressly, that Savonarola had first by his sermons made an impression on the minds of the children, and then 'perceiving so great a change, he thought it would be well to establish some order among them, that might tend to keep them in a right course of life; and he made over the charge of this to Frà Domenico of Pescia, he himself, on account of his numerous occupations, not being able to attend to it. That friar speedily collecting them together, continued to feed their minds with short religious discourses.' P.105.

† On January 25, 1496 (new style), a provision passed the Consiglio Maggiore, containing certain rules to be observed in the dress of children.—*Archivio delle Riformazioni*.

direction of leaders, traversed the city, and knocked at the doors of rich and poor, asking for such things as they chose to call *vanities*, or the *anathema*. These were obscene pictures and books; or dresses and masks commonly worn in the carnival; and when they had received them they repeated a prayer that had been composed by Savonarola, and then proceeded on their visits. In this way an immense quantity of objects was collected, which were to be used in a ceremony invented by Frà Domenico and Savonarola. On the last day of the carnival, the 7th of February, no one thought any more of the usual Pagan customs; but all were prepared to witness an imposing religious spectacle. Early in the morning, men, women, and children were present at a solemn mass celebrated by the Friar, who, with his own hands, dispensed the sacrament to the assembled people. Returning home, after they had partaken of a frugal meal, they walked in a great procession during the day through the city; a statue of the Infant Jesus—a most beautiful work of Donatello, supported by four angels, pointing with the left hand to a crown of thorns, the right hand in the act of blessing the people—being carried before them.* A vast multitude accompanied them; some in white dresses; the greater number holding red crosses and olive branches, singing hymns and religious lauds. Collectors of offerings went about with silver trays, to receive contributions for the Buonomini di San Martino, who received that day a larger amount of alms than was usual in a whole year. On the arrival of the procession in the Piazza, they found an octangular pyramid 60 feet in height, with a circumference of 240 feet at the base. It was divided into fifteen steps or stages, on which were placed all the vanities collected during the carnival, and was

* It still exists in the church of San Lorenzo.—Tr.

surmounted by a monstrous image personifying that festival; the interior of the pyramid being filled with combustible materials. The Piazza was quickly filled by the crowd; and the children were placed partly on the *ringhiera*, and partly in the Loggia dei Lanzi,* continuing to sing religious hymns, and verses denouncing the carnival. On a signal given, the pile was set fire to on four sides; the smoke and flames ascended; the trumpets of the attendants of the Signory were sounded; the great bell of the Palazzo was tolled; and the multitude raised a shout of joy, as if, on that day, the enemy of the human race had been slain. Thus finished the procession, and the carnival of 1497.†

Those who spoke with contempt of everything directed or advised by Savonarola and the Friars of St. Mark's could not, of course, abstain from denunciations against the destruction of those objects which, they said, might have been sold, and the money given to the poor.‡ It is, however, remarkable that among the older writers we rarely find any allusion to those accusations, and in the almost infinite number of the writings for and against the Friar, in which every argument seems to have been brought forward that had any tendency to load him with injurious charges, this alone seems to have been quite passed over. Not so, however, with more modern authors.

At the time when a passion for antiquities began to revive, when it was carried almost to such a degree of fanaticism as to seem to lead to the belief that men were destined for no other object than to publish ancient manuscripts, and recover old paintings and monuments, the *bonfire of vanities* afforded an excellent opportunity

* A large portico, still the chief ornament of the Piazza.—Tr.

† Burlamacchi gives a most minute description of this solemnity, which is also mentioned by all the other biographers.

‡ Nardi, p. 114.

of rhetorical display to those who were discoursing on those times. The terms fanatic, barbarian, destroyer of our ancient grandeur, were liberally bestowed on Savonarola. If an ancient manuscript had been lost, it was straightway declared to have been burned by Savonarola. If an edition of Boccaccio had become very scarce, it was certainly destroyed by the Friar.* If an ancient statue had disappeared, no one doubted that the Piagnoni had annihilated it in the *bonfire of vanities*.

But what bonfire could consume a marble statue? Was it credible that children could collect a whole edition of Boccaccio? The subject, however, afforded a grand theme for orators, and chimed in so admirably with the passions of the public, that few could resist the temptation to stand forth as the defender of the ancient grandeur of their monuments, and to make a long oration on the fatal effects of fanaticism. We must observe that the first, but innocent, author of all these extravagances was Burlamacchi himself, who with an ingenuousness quite his own, dwells at great length on the bonfire, bestowing upon it a high colouring and exaggeration as a most religious and most Christian work; nor did he ever think that he could say too much on what ever tended to exalt the holy zeal of his hero. But even what he says is not sufficient to justify the excesses in which modern writers have indulged; for among the numerous objects mentioned by that biographer, they have not been able to fix upon one the loss of which is a real subject of regret.† Unless perhaps that which, at the close of his narrative, Burlamacchi exultingly tells

* This was commonly said of the edition brought out by Valdarfer, a copy of which was sold at Paris in 1812 for 52,000 francs (nearly 2,000 guineas). See a note to Nardi, in Arbib's edition, p. 140.

† Burlamacchi does mention several objects, but not one of which it is possible to estimate the artistic or literary value. Besides dresses and masks, they appear to have been portraits of certain females of bad character, books ornamented with gilding, and such like.

us, how a Venetian merchant, having offered for the accumulated mass a sum of 22,000 florins, had his portrait placed on the top of the pile, side by side with the figure of Carnival, and burned along with it. A sum so enormous and fabulous gave free scope to fancy, and readily created imaginings of the loss of the most precious articles.

Friends and foes of Savonarola having for different reasons equally dealt in exaggerations in this matter, it becomes difficult to determine the just limits of the truth. We must take into account that while Burlamacchi is very diligent in narrating facts which he himself observed, or which were told him by eye-witnesses, he is always inaccurate and apt to exaggerate in his figures. Thus, in speaking of the procession of the children, he makes them as numerous as the whole population of Florence at that time, and when he tells us of alms collected, his figures exceed all probability. His mistakes in years and dates have been the chief cause of the great confusion among the writers of Savonarola's life, and we have found it necessary to reconstruct the whole chronology from original documents. What weight can we attach to conclusions founded upon the figures of this writer? It is a strange logic that would give credit to the numbers of Burlamacchi in this case, and yet discredit him in his other statements. Moreover, can we for a moment believe that Savonarola could have burned statues and precious manuscripts, for which the Italians were making long and perilous voyages, and risking life and fortune? Is it to be credited that in the days of Marsilio Ficino and Politian, no one would have raised his voice in condemnation of him? And that Nardi, the translator of Livy, and so warm an admirer of the ancients, would have been contented with a few passing remarks on those who bewailed these losses.

But in rejecting the wild exaggerations, let us not deny the existence of the fact, but rather endeavour to estimate its real amount. What *the vanities* were which were destroyed on this occasion, we know not, but they must certainly have chiefly consisted of dresses, masks, and other things brought out during the carnival;* for the bonfire was got up for the sole purpose of doing away with the game of stones, and to put an end to the old carnival festivities. We can well believe that in order to mark his disapprobation of the evil habits of the time, Savonarola might have caused the burning of a copy of the Decamerone, which was then the favourite book of nuns in their cloisters, and of copies of those obscene poets which got into the hands of women and children, and against which he had fulminated from the pulpit with so much earnestness. Nor are we disposed to excuse him even for this; but if the learned may have cause to lament the loss of a few volumes, if the philosopher may deplore the human weakness of combating one error by falling into another, and opposing fanaticism by fanaticism, the historian must remind them that such has always been the character of men who have been animated by a strong and excessive religious zeal. What thing was spared by the iconoclasts in the east, or by the primitive Christians in Rome? Nor can the progress of civilisation from those times be brought against Savonarola; for in the following century, in Germany and Holland, neither church nor picture escaped the far more devastating fury of the destroyers of images. John Calvin, a man of undoubted learning, and of an iron mind, a contemporary of Leo the Tenth and Francis the First, who had raised himself to be the chief man in

* This is fully confirmed by Guicciardini in his *Storia di Firenze*: 'The children went about collecting dice, cards, paints, pictures, and indecent books, and burned them publicly in the Piazza of the Signory, having first made a procession with great sanctity and devotion on that same day, which used to be marked by a thousand iniquities.'

a Republic, but without the merit of having been its founder, and called himself the herald of liberty and toleration, not only visited profane swearers and those who worked on Sundays with severe punishment, but imprisoned women for having ornamented their hair with insufficient modesty;* and was he not the same man who, in the year 1553, sent to the stake the innocent and unfortunate Servetus?

But why awaken these sad remembrances of the past, which all equally humiliate the human mind? We have no occasion to seek examples of religious fanaticism in defending Savonarola. If the reasoning we have brought forward be not enough to prove the falsity of the charge of barbarous destroyer, facts will suffice, and one which occurred at the same period as that bonfire of vanities will itself for ever put an end to the dispute.

We have spoken of the late financial embarrassment of the Republic. This caused the Signory to determine to expose to sale the Medicean library, which, on the expulsion of the family, had been confiscated along with the rest of their property. But the pecuniary difficulties of private citizens were not less than those of the Government, so that there was the greatest danger that that magnificent collection would have been scattered, or have fallen into the hands of strangers, so numerous were the creditors of the Medici; among whom Philip de Comines, the French ambassador, had a claim of 1,000 florins. Fortunately the friars of St. Mark's had at that time a large sum of money at their disposal, having just completed the sale of property which Savonarola had advised them to part with, in furtherance of their vow of poverty. He thought that a nobler opportunity could not have offered for turning to profitable account that which the sale had

* In the archives of Geneva still exists the Act which condemned a woman to imprisonment, *parce qu'elle n'avait pas les cheveux abattus*.

produced. By purchasing that very rich collection of manuscripts they would save it from dispersion or from being obtained by some stranger; they would be able to place it in the only library in Italy then open to the public, that of their own convent; while at the same time they would assist the Republic in its great difficulties. To what more noble or more holy purpose could the friars of St. Mark's have applied their wealth?

They bought the collection for 3,000 florins, paying at once 2,000, which they had received; and in January, 1498, by the assistance of Bernardo Nasi, they engaged to pay the claim of Philip de Comines in eighteen months, hoping that in a work of public utility they would be aided by the friends and relatives of the family. All this took place during the years in which the Medicean carnivals had been put an end to, and the transactions were going on at the same time that the so much abused bonfire of vanities took place. Thus Savonarola applied the property of his convent, and incurred a very heavy debt, to save to the world that noble Laurentian collection which now forms one of the greatest treasures of Florence, and was then the most complete and most precious collection of Greek and Latin authors known in Europe. Such was the man whom many did not hesitate to call a barbarous friar, the burner of ancient manuscripts, the destroyer of pictures and of statues.*

* We have already alluded to the library of St. Mark's, and will now give some further particulars respecting it. Niccolo Niccoli left his famous collection of about 600 ancient manuscripts to the public; and Cosmo de' Medici, as we have mentioned, paid the debts for which it was answerable; and after reserving about 200 of the manuscripts to himself, he presented the remainder to St. Mark's. He and Lorenzo continued to add to their collection with a care so well known, that it is unnecessary to dwell upon it here. The friars of St. Mark did so likewise; and it appears by a public instrument, a copy of which is in the convent, that on the 10th of December, 1445, they had paid 250 florins for some manuscripts. These additions continued to 1495, when they bought the Medicean library. In the examination of the friar Robert

But if our Friar had a strong feeling for ancient manuscripts, his admiration for the fine arts was quite as great. Of this he gave a proof by his having shown a desire to train the novices to some profession connected with them, in order to meet the expenses of the convent by the sale of their works, and render alms unnecessary. He had always about him a select number of the most eminent artists of his time. The affection for him of Frà Bartolommeo della Porta is known to everyone to have been so great, that, for four years after the death of his master, he never could touch his pallet.* The whole family of Della Robbia were devoted

Ubal dini da Gagliano, as a witness at the trial of Savonarola, he made the following statement respecting the convent library :—‘As to any ‘subscriptions of money, I never before heard of them from any one, ‘until what you yourselves have said this day; I know nothing about ‘them. This, however, I know very well; that having bought some ‘books from the public authorities, and principally from the Signory, ‘for 3,000 ducats, and remaining indebted for 1,000 of them, Bernardo ‘Nasi became surety for that sum for eighteen months to Monsignore ‘d’Argenton, in France, and so came under obligations to Bernardo Nasi, ‘for the same period, and we have no means of paying them unless by ‘asking the assistance of divers persons among our friends. And these ‘things are known to me, because I transacted the business, having been ‘librarian in St. Mark’s for five years.’—*Archivio delle Riformazioni*. In the same archives are to be found the discussions of the Signory *pro libris olim Laurentii de Medicis*; they are dated August 31, 1495; October 19, 1495; January 24, 1497 (Florentine style); May 7, and December 12, 1498.

After the death of Savonarola, among many persecutions the convent underwent, there was that of having had taken away from them, under false pretences, not only the books of the Medicean collection, but also a part of those they had acquired in 1445. They were restored in October 1500, under new conditions, but being under the pressure of debts, and there being no longer a Savonarola to look after their books, they were sold to Galeotto Franciotti, employed by the Cardinal John de’ Medici, afterwards Leo X., and taken to Rome; from whence they were brought back several years afterwards. Bandini, *Lettera sopra i collettori di codici orientali, esistenti nella insigne Basilica Laurenziana*; *Annales conventus S. Marci*, fol. 8; Padre Marchese, *Storia del convento di San Marco*.

* Vasari has related that on the day of the carnival Frà Bartolommeo burned some of his drawings of the naked figure. Even if the fact were true, there is no disparagement in it; but it is to be observed that Vasari lived a century after Savonarola, to whom he shows a dislike in all his writings, nor is he very favourable to the memory of Frà Bartolommeo.

to Savonarola; two of them received the Dominican gown from his hands, and a veneration for his name was for many years traditional in their family. Vasari tells us that Lorenzo di Credi was 'a partisan of the sect of Frà Girolamo,' and he says of the architect Cronaca, that so great was his enthusiasm for everything connected with Savonarola, that he would listen to no reasoning that was in any way opposed to that of the Friar; and Sandro Botticelli was the first who illustrated his writings with beautiful engravings. But it is enough to mention Michelangiolo Buonarroto, who is known to have been one of the most constant hearers of his sermons, which he was in the habit of reading over and over again in his old age, and who was always calling to mind the beneficial impression made upon him by the voice and gestures of Savonarola.* And did not Buonarroto demonstrate on the bastions of San Miniato del Monte, where he defended the resuscitated Republic (1529-30), how much he had profited by those sermons.

So great indeed has been the injustice of those who have said that the Friar was no friend to the fine arts, that an eloquent French writer has stood forth in his defence.† But carried away by his strong feelings on

* Besides the innumerable Italian works on Michelangiolo, see the *Life of Michel Angelo Buonarroto*, by Harford, a most valuable work, recently published in England, in which the author makes particular mention of the intercourse Buonarroto had with Savonarola.

† Rio, *Art Chrétien*. While mentioning this author, it will not be irrelevant if we make some observations upon what is said in his work on the Friar. He divides the history of Italian painting into two great schools: Christian painting, or as some have called it the *purismo*, and the *naturalista* painting, in which last he includes not only those who confined themselves to a strict imitation of the truth, but those who gave themselves up entirely to the study of the antique. According to Rio, this second school is no other than a degradation of Christian art. Finding then, that in the fifteenth century the two schools advanced side by side, he attributes the whole advance of the *naturalismo* to the Medici, the encouragers of classical and Pagan conceptions; while to Savonarola alone he ascribes the revival of Christian art. Now, however true it may be, that the Friar was a great defender of Christian conceptions, in opposition to the Medici, who wished to make classical learning an

the subject, and by a spirit of system, he oversteps the strict limits of truth, and thereby weakens his just and noble defence; for he would make Savonarola the head of a school of painting in Italy, a restorer of what is called *Christian art*. He makes all the artists who were his admirers to have been pupils in that school. Even if Savonarola had wished to assume such a position, he certainly had neither the time nor the means for it; for as he again and again repeats, the overpowering agitations of politics and religion had forced him to relinquish all other studies, and every other occupation.

The consideration of this last subject leads us na-

instrument of moral corruption, or, at least to make it operate as a check to the more liberal course of new ideas, there can be no doubt that, so far as painting is concerned, the theory of M. Rio will not bear being analysed by the tests of facts. If we turn to those paintings with which the Friar was surrounded, we shall find that not one of them can be classed with that Christian art of which M. Rio would have him considered to have been the restorer. In preference to all others, we will take Frà Bartolommeo, and ask, was not he among the first who gave a decided impulse to painting in the direction of the classic style, and among the earliest of the cinquecento school? And was it not Michelangiolo Buonarroti who carried it to its farthest limits? Among the admirers of Savonarola we find, it is true, the family Della Robbia, but Luca, who was the immortal sculptor of so many images of the sacred Madonna, was then dead; he lived with the Beato Angelico in the time of Cosimo de' Medici. Another follower of Savonarola, Cronaca, was the first to introduce classic architecture, to which the hall of the Consiglio Maggiore bears witness. Lorenzo di Credi is known to have been a pupil and an imitator of Leonardo da Vinci, and Sandro Botticelli is said by M. Rio to have been 'infected with paganism.' Where, then, is the school of Christian art founded by Savonarola, if his followers are all classed in the very opposite one of the *naturalismo*? M. Rio has evidently been led into his mistakes by his desire to attribute the whole progress of the art to causes wholly religious. It was a noble wish, but unfortunately it is not always supported by the sober reality of facts. In the present case there is no doubt that the painting which M. Rio calls Christian art was most flourishing in the time of Cosimo de' Medici, whilst in that of Savonarola it had rapidly given way to the progress of the classic art, which very soon found a representative in Raphael, for whom M. Rio appears to have but little sympathy.

Before concluding these remarks, we are bound to say that M. Rio has admirably well understood the true moral distinction between Savonarola and the Medici, which he has pointed out not only with warmth of feeling, but with eloquence.

turally to examine what were Savonarola's ideas respecting the beautiful; for it occupied his thoughts in no small degree, and was never lost sight of. The mind of the Friar took a wide range: in his philosophy he embraced the whole *scibile*; and in whatever direction he looked, new and original conceptions arose before him. We shall begin by collecting a few observations from his sermons: 'In what does beauty consist—in colours? No. In figures? No. Beauty results from harmony in all the parts and colours. This applies to composite subjects; in simple, beauty is in light. Look at the sun and the stars—their beauty is in light; behold the spirits of the blessed—light constitutes their beauty; raise your thoughts to the Almighty—He is light and is beauty itself.* The beauty of man and woman is greater and more perfect the nearer it approaches to the primary beauty. But what, then, is this beauty? It is a quality resulting from a due proportion and harmony between the several members and parts of the body. You would never say that a woman was handsome because she had a fine nose and pretty hands; but when her features harmonise. Whence comes this beauty? Inquire, and you will find that it is from the soul.† Take two women of equal beauty: let one of them be virtuous and decorous, and the other a courtesan. The former you will see shining with angelic light; but the other, however handsome, will bear no comparison with her who is virtuous.‡ You will see in the sainted one an object of love to all; all eyes will be turned towards her, even those of carnal desire.'§

* Sermons on Amos and Zechariah, that delivered on Friday after the third Sunday in Lent.

† Sermons on Ezekiel: sermon xxviii.

‡ The third of the sermons on Haggai.

§ Sermons on Amos and Zechariah, that delivered on Friday after the third Sunday in Lent.

‘ And the reason is this—that the pure soul partakes of the beauty of God. We are told of the Virgin, that, so great was her beauty, men stood stupified before her; and yet, so great was the sanctity reflected from her, that in no one ever entered an impure thought; but all held her in reverence.’

He then took occasion to address the female part of his audience, condemning their attention to material and external beauties, forgetful of the spiritual, which should alone be prized: ‘ Ye women, who glory in your ornaments, in your head-dresses, in your hands, I tell you that you are all ugly! Would you see true beauty? “Observe a devout person, man or woman, in whom the Spirit dwells; observe such a one, I say, while in the act of prayer, when the countenance is suffused with divine beauty, and the prayer is over. You will then see the beauty of God reflected in that face, and a countenance almost angelic.”’* He then turned to the artists, who, in painting images of saints and of the Virgin, not only make representations of the various fashions of garments, but, in place of endeavouring to give the noble and holy expression of an elevated and sublime type, very often give the portrait of some person notorious for indecent and scandalous habits. ‘ And we find young men going about, saying to this person and to that — She is a very Magdalene; or he is a true St. John; or she is an image of the Virgin; and then ye place their portraits in our churches, to the great scandal of things divine. In this, ye painters, ye do much mischief; and if ye knew, as well as I do, how great that mischief is, you would not be guilty of it. “Ye set up all those vanities in the churches. Do ye believe that the Virgin went about dressed as ye represent her. I

* Sermon xxviii. in Ezekiel.

“tell you, that she went about clothed as a humble young woman.”*

These ideas, constantly repeated in his sermons, form integral parts of an entire system. The triumph of Christianity and of things spiritual was the object of his life; and whether it was the fine arts, manners, politics, or anything else, he looked on all with that object in view. But that our readers may be better acquainted with his æsthetic opinions, we will call their attention to a small work he wrote on poetry; which took its rise thus. In the warmth of his eloquence, he was not unfrequently apt to make use of very strong expressions—sometimes to excess—against obscene poets, and the bad habit of the preachers in his day, of filling their sermons with quotations from Pagan writers. He thus gave occasion to much murmuring against him, which represented him as an enemy of all poets and all poetry. This induced a very learned friend of his, Ugolino Verino, to address a letter to him on the subject, urging him to reply to these calumnies, and make his true sentiments known. Savonarola then published his small work on *The Division and Utility of all the Sciences*; a part of which is entitled *Apologetica del poetare*.† His object was to show that he undervalued no part of the entire *scibile*, but wished to assign to each its true place. As we have already discussed the other parts of the division of the sciences adopted by Savonarola,‡ we shall refer now to that part only in which he treats of poetry, in order to conclude what we have said in the present chapter with the author’s own words. We would, however, remark that, in this part,

* Sermons on Amos and Zechariah; that delivered on the Saturday after the second Sunday in Lent.

† *Opus perutile de divisione ac utilitate omnium scientiarum: in poeticen apologeticus*. Venetiis, 1542. There is also an edition of the quattrocento S. L. and A.

‡ See Book i. c. vi.

the author here makes no allusion to the *bonfire of vanities*; whereas, if he had felt himself in any degree called upon for a defence of that ceremony, this would not only have been a good opportunity, but it would have been almost necessary that he should not pass it over.

It begins by addressing a letter to Verino, in which he says: 'It never entered into my mind to say a word in condemnation of the art of poetry, I condemned solely the abuse which many had made of it;* although I have been calumniated on that account by many persons, both in speaking and writing. The truth is, that I had made up my mind to pay no regard to the calumnies, but to follow the saying which tells us not to answer a fool with his folly; but what you have said to me has induced me to take up my pen. You must not, however, expect from me any elegancies of style; for it is more than twenty years since I left off all studies of the humanities, for discipline of a graver nature.' After this preamble, he enters at once on the subject, beginning with drawing a distinction between the substance and the form of poetry. 'Some persons,' he 'says, would resolve it all into form; but, in doing so, they greatly deceive themselves. The essence of poetry is to be found in philosophy; without it no one can be a true poet. If anyone believe that the art of poetry teaches us only dactyls and spondees, long and short syllables, and the ornaments of speech, he has certainly fallen into a great mistake.'† He then proceeds to define poetry according to a thoroughly scholastic conception, which, however, he very soon lays aside for more original ideas. 'The object of poetry,' he says, 'is to persuade, by means of that syllogism

* 'Nec ego aliquando artem poeticam damnandam putavi, sed quorundam abusum.' *Epistola ad Verinum*, in principio dell' opera.

† 'Si quis credit artem poeticam solum docere dactylos et spondaeos, syllabas longas et breves, ornatumque verborum, magno profecto errore tenetur.' *Apologeticus*, &c., in principio.

called an example, expressed with elegance of language, so as to convince, and, at the same time, to delight us. And as our soul has supreme delight in song and harmony, the ancients contrived the measures of versification; that, by such means, men might be more readily excited to virtue. But measure is mere form; and the poet may produce a poem without metre, and without verse.* This, in fact, is the case in the Holy Scriptures, in which our Lord makes true poetry consist in wisdom; true eloquence in the spirit of truth; hence our minds are not occupied with the outward letter, but are filled with the spirit; the essence of truth is instilled into them, and, in a wonderful manner, it feeds them without any admixture of earthly vanities. How vain is all eloquence, which does not secure the purposed end! How useless is the painted and ornamented ship, which, floundering among the billows, never brings its crew to their harbour, but rather carries them far from it! What advantage is it to our souls, to tickle the ears, to bestow praise upon ourselves, to eulogise philosophers with pompous declamations, to sing with feeble melodies the strains of poets, and, at the same time, lay aside, or rarely call to mind, the Gospel of Christ?†

After discoursing on poetry in general, he speaks of the poets of his own time. There is, he says, a fallacious race of pretended poets, who know no better than to tread in the footsteps of the Greeks and Romans; they keep to the same form, the same metre; they invoke the same gods, they do not venture to use any other names, or any other words than those they find in the ancients. We are men like them, and have received from God the same power of naming the things that, in

* 'Potest enim poeta uti argumento suo, et per decentes similitudines discurrere sine versu.' Ibidem.

† Ibidem, p. 44.

endless variety, pass before us. But these men make themselves slaves of the ancients to such a degree that they not only will not utter a word for which they have not their authority, but will not even say that which the ancients could not have said.* And this is not only a false poetry, but one most pernicious to youth. I would spare no trouble to prove it so, were it not as clear as the sun; experience, the great mistress of all things, has made manifest before the face of man the evils which grow out of that false kind of poetry, so that it is useless to stop to pronounce its condemnation.† But what shall we say when we find the heathen themselves condemning such poets! Did not Plato himself, he whom in the present day we see lauded to the skies, declare that a law ought to be passed to expel those poets from the city who, from the example, and under the sanction of the most wicked of the gods, and by the allurements of the most corrupting verses, contaminate everything with vile lusts and moral degradation. What then are our Christian princes about? Why do they pretend ignorance of these mischiefs? Why do they not issue a law to expel from their cities not only these false poets, but their books also, and all the works of ancient authors who have written on libidinous subjects, and praise false gods? It would be well if all such

* 'Nam et nos homines sumus sicut et ipsi, et potestatem imponendi nomina æqualem a Deo accepimus. Possumus ergo addere et minuere sicut et ipsi potuerunt, nam et multa jam mutata sunt. Quidam, enim, adeo perstrinxerunt se, et carceri antiquorum intellectum proprium adeo manciparunt; ut nedum contra eorum consuetudinem aliquid proferre nolint, sed nec velint dicere quod illi non dixerunt. . . . Quæ enim ratio est ista, quæ virtus argumenti: antiqui non ita locuti sunt, ergo nec nos ita loquamur?' p. 40. We have elsewhere quoted this passage, and now repeat it in illustration of the subject before us.

† 'Modum autem artis, quem nunc nostri poetæ servant, hoc est metrorum ac fabularum, laudumque Deorum, adolescentibus pestis est perniciosissima. Et certe ad hoc probandum laborarem, nisi sole clarius appareret. *Experientia ipsa, verum magistra*, ita nostris oculis mala quæ ex perverso usu poetiæ artis eveniunt manifestat, ut non oporteat in probatione sudare.' P. 55.

books were destroyed, and none were allowed to remain except such as excite to virtuous conduct.' *

These are the passages upon which many rest their charges against Savonarola, but we have shown again and again that they were merely strong expressions, and that in reality he held all the treasures of ancient and modern art in the highest estimation; although he was some times so carried away in the warmth of his discourse as to appear to fall into an excess of severity. Even this may be pardoned when we consider the corruption of the age, when all true, noble, and elevating poetry was abandoned, and obscenity alone had any attraction. 'And there are even among the ancients,' he continued, 'those who looked upon those vile productions with indignation, who exulted in the generous actions of great men; such writers turned poetry to good account, and I neither can nor ought to say one word against them.† Nevertheless, even these best poets ought to be read under the guidance of a sound and firm system of Catholic education. Such books ought never to be put into the hands of young persons until they have been reared by the mother's milk of Catholic doctrines, and until these have been strongly impressed upon their minds. It is a matter of no small moment that youth should be led into one path rather than into another; it is indeed of great, of primary, importance; for the beginning is more than the half of all things. As for me, I consider it far more important that Christians should be distinguished by good habits and a modest speech, than that by their eloquence they should render themselves unworthy of the name of Christ.‡

* See last note, p. 147.

† 'Verum quidam, non amatoria, non laudes idolorum, non turpia; sed virorum fortium gesta atque moralia versibus descripserunt, et bene usi sunt arte poetica et modo eius: hoc igitur damnare nec possum nec debeo.' P. 55.

‡ 'Ego melius puto Christianos, moribus ornatos, minori fulgere eloquentia, quam propter eloquentiam Christi nomen perdere.' P. 55.

He concludes by considering the relation of poetry to religion, and says : ‘ If a poet does no more than sing the praises of religion, he may succeed in obtaining the commendation of decorum, but never that of having been useful. The spirit alone gives life, the letter kills ; if the poet does not seek honour and glory by the subject he selects, how can he ever serve the cause of religion, before which all human interests disappear ? A poor ignorant and simple girl, praying fervently on her knees, is a far more edifying example to us than anything either poet or philosopher can produce, who pompously celebrates the praises of God. The heart of the girl is warm through faith, while their minds are full of worldly vanities.’*

There can be little doubt that many will consider all this a preeminently exclusive manner of considering such subjects ; but it springs from a system of criticism much more sound than at first sight appears. Art, in truth, dwells in a world of its own, in which it finds its own object, and that is in itself sufficient ; those who, thinking to ennoble it, have wished to make it a medium of moral, political, or religious ends, have brought it down at once to the rank of prose. And it is a fact, that no poem, picture, or piece of music has attained immortality from the occasion, however noble and generous, which gave rise to it, while several works have endured through ages of civilization, although produced on occasions deserving of very little praise. Savonarola had by no means an inadequate conception of art ; on the contrary, he had comprehended its true genius : the mistake he made was this, that he sometimes did not sufficiently allow how much mental culture ennobles the heart, and how much the works of art elevate the mind. He attacks with too much

* This idea not only occurs in the above-mentioned work, but is constantly repeated in his sermons.

severity that very philosophy in which he was himself so strong, and that same poetry he so dearly loved. But those were vastly mistaken who believed him to be insensible to the sublime harmonies of truth, to the secret music of the beautiful. What but philosophy gave him comfort and courage in the hard trials of his youth? What other than music and poetry were the confidants of his early griefs? His own verses testify that he was no unworthy worshipper of the muses; of whom some would have him to have been a blind contemner. And if they do not always merit the designation of true poetry, they are not wanting in a peculiar originality and loftiness of conception, which are most valuable in showing us the noble nature of the mind which composed them. We will therefore submit some of them to the consideration of our readers.

Although his verses have all a religious cast, they may be divided into two very distinct kinds, and singularly confirm what he has said respecting the genius and various descriptions of poetry. He wrote the greater number of his *Canzoni* when he was a young man, before he had estranged himself from the world, when he was an ardent student of literature, and when he wrote them he gave full expression to his inmost feelings. The spiritual lauds, which are much more numerous, were written at a more advanced age, with an object wholly religious, and to counteract the *Canti Carnascaleschi* (carnival songs) so much in vogue among the people. In these lauds we are at once set free from all the restrictions of art and poetry: the metre, the form, and almost the very ideas, are suggested and regulated by another kind of poetry, with which they were to be contrasted. The author adopts the same strain, the same style, and endeavours to contrast each blasphemy with sentiments of religion and faith. By voluntarily laying himself down upon a Procrustean bed, he is forced by

his antagonism to imitate lines both poor in ideas and full of artificial conceits, and is thus obliged to submit to a miserable contest with words and sophisms. It is no wonder, then, that no true poetry is to be found in these lauds; we would rather say of them that there only runs throughout a temperate tone of decorum and good sense. When Girolamo Benivieni, a poet of some celebrity in his day, attempts the same kind of poetry,* he very often soars not only beyond the rules of art, but beyond the dictates of common sense; thus, while singing the joy and delight of passing the bounds of reason in the love for Jesus,† he could give the name of poetry to such lines as these:—

To'tre once almen di speme,
Tre di fede e sei d'amore,
Due di pianto, e poni insieme
Tutto al foco del timore:
Fa dipoi bollir tre ore;
Premi, in fine, e aggiungi tanto
D' umiltade e dolor, quanto
Basta a far questa pazzia.‡

Contrasted with these verses, the lauds of Savonarola are resplendent with beauty; the conception of them is more simple, the sentiment more spontaneous, the point more practical and moral. We will quote one which was written the same year as the new form of government was established:—

Viva, viva in nostro core
Cristo re, duce e signore!
Ciaseun purghi l'intelletto,
La memoria e voluntade,
Del terrestre e vano affetto;

* See *Poesie* di Girolamo Benivieni, Firenze, 1500.

No attempt has, for obvious reasons, been made to translate the specimens of poetry given in this chapter.

† Ognun gridi, com' io grido,
Sempre pazzo, pazzo, pazzo,

‡ *Poesie* di G. Benivieni.

Arda tutto in caritade,
 Contemplando la bontade
 Di Gesù re di Fiorenza;
 Con digiuni e penitenza
 Si riformi dentro e fore.

Se volete Gesù regni,
 Per sua grazia in vostro core,
 Tutti gli odii e pravi sdegni
 Commutate in dolce amore;
 Discacciando ogni rancore,
 Ciascun prenda in sè la pace:
 Questo è quel che a Gesù piace,
 Su nel Cielo e qui nel core.*

He wrote many lauds, some of which are unpublished; but they do little to enable us to claim him as a poet, for, besides having the same defects as the others, they had not received the last touch of their author, and are therefore in an incomplete state.†

But when Savonarola threw aside the fetters and the servitude that the subject itself imposed, when his verses were not necessarily the means and the instrument of a purpose foreign to poetry, and his voice came spontaneously from his breast, he then might have said—‘And I too am a poet.’ This may be said of many of his canzoni, composed in his early youth, when his mind, still worked upon by his passions, had not yet given way to those celestial delights which made him look down with so entire a disregard upon all worldly things. In those on *The Ruin of the Church* and on *The Ruin of the World* we find both vigour and poetic talent, but united with negligence of form. Other canzoni are not without great delicacy of sentiment, elegantly ex-

* This laud is the fifth of the poems of Savonarola, published by Audin, and is there entitled as a *Canzona ai Fiorentini*.

† The autograph manuscript, in the possession of Signor Giberto Borromeo of Genoa, seems to be a rough draft, and in many parts cannot be deciphered.

pressed, as may be seen in some parts of that which begins:—

Quando il soave e mio fido conforto,
Per la pietà della mia stanca vita,
Con la sua dolce citara fornita
Mi trae dall' onde al suo beato porto,
Io sento al core un ragionare accorto.

This is also the case in that to Mary Magdalene,* in which he describes with great tenderness the saint carried up to heaven by Jesus Christ :

E tutto il suo cor arde,
E nell' amor di Dio non si raffrena.

But as a fair example of these canzoni, we will give the whole of one written in praise of Catherine of Vegri, born in 1463, and canonized by the Court of Rome in 1724 :—

I.

Anima bella, che le membra sante,
Salendo al ciel, abbandonasti in terra,
Per far fede fra noi dell' altra vita ;
Or ch' è fornita pur la lunga guerra,
Ove giammai non fusti isbigottita,
Nè mai voltasti al Sposo tuo le piante ;
Sei gita a lui davante
Col cor pudico e con la mente pura,
Per trionfar della tua gran vittoria,
In sempiterna gloria,
Fuor di quest' aspra e cieca vita dura,
Là dove ormai con Cristo sei sicura.

II.

Il sacro corpo ben dimostra quanto
Esaltata t' ha Iddio nell' alto cielo :
E la virtude che fra noi si vede,
Spirto gentil, esempio al mondo felo,
Fiamma celeste alle coscienze frede,
E degli afflitti è refrigerio santo !

* It is the thirteenth of the poems published by Audin: the twelfth is also addressed to the same saint, but is much inferior.

Chi con devoto pianto
 A te s' inchina, Vergine beata,
 Sciolto riman da mille pensier frali;
 Perchè quanto tu vali
 Dinanzi a Cristo, o sposa coronata,
 Il ciel il vede e 'l mondo ove sei nata!

III.

Da mille parti, sol per fama, core
 Diverse genti a rimirar le membra
 Che, essendo spente, par che viva ancora,
 E del suo spirto par che si rimembra.*
 Ogn' uomo il vede, quivi ogn' uom l' adora,
 E pien di maraviglia gli fa onore.
 Deh! qual selvaggio core
 Non lacrimasse forte di dolcezza,
 Vedendo l' opre sante e l' umil viso?
 Se, adunque, è un paradiso
 Il corpo al mondo e tanto qui si prezza,
 Che fia a veder di spirto la bellezza?
 O felice alma, che giammai non torse
 Il santo piè dal dritto suo cammino.
 Sempre sprezzando quel che 'l mondo brama!

If we are not mistaken, we find in this canzone great delicacy, and exquisite tenderness of feeling. In general, however, it must be admitted, that if we are to judge the poetical compositions of Savonarola solely as productions of art, we shall be obliged to be often severe; for there is constantly a supreme disregard of form, and the conception itself rarely attains the loftiness of true poetical conception. Nevertheless we rise from reading his poems with increased admiration of their author; for if true poetry be absent from the verses, we recognise it in his heart; not a mental operation, but the life and reality of the soul. It comes out, it is true, in flashes, and at distant intervals; but it shines more brightly the less conscious the author appears.

* It would be difficult to correct the ungrammatical parts of this strophe, which however, is not without merit.

Savonarola was also the author of some Latin compositions, which, although they may not have the measure of verse, may still be termed poetical, inasmuch as he has taken the Psalms as a model. In one of them he celebrates the praises of God, saying: ‘I sought Thee everywhere, but found Thee not. I asked the earth—Art thou my God? and I was answered—Thou deceivest thyself, I am not thy God. I asked the air, and was answered—Ascend still higher. I asked the sky, the sun, the stars, and they all answered me—He who made me out of nothing, He is God; He fills the heavens and the earth; He is in thy heart. I then, O Lord, sought Thee far off, and Thou wast near. I asked my eyes if Thou hadst entered by them, and they answered—We know colours only. I asked the ear, and was answered, that it knew sound only. The senses then, O Lord, knew Thee not; Thou hast entered into my soul, Thou art in my heart, and Thou makest manifest Thyself to me when I am performing works of charity.’* There is thus in all that Savonarola writes something which leads him to a higher sphere; there is a holy and a noble aspiration which, bursting through an outward rind, which is often obstinately hard, makes us sensible of his moral greatness, and forces everyone to admit that, if he was not always a poet, he never failed to afford in himself a subject for the loftiest poetry.

* See *Alcuni devotissimi trattati*, Venezia, 1537.



BOOK FOURTH.

[1497—1498.]



CHAPTER I.

SAVONAROLA PREACHES UPON EZEKIEL DURING LENT, 1497 — THE LIFE AND HABITS OF PIERO DE' MEDICI AT ROME — HE MAKES A NEW AND UNSUCCESSFUL ATTEMPT TO RE-ESTABLISH HIMSELF IN FLORENCE.

[1497.]

SAVONAROLA continued his sermons on Ezekiel in Lent 1497, bringing forward various arguments of much importance in the contest with Rome, which continued to rage, and even more fiercely than before. They have, however, been very imperfectly transmitted to us; for Violi, who noted them down, very often omitted those parts of most importance, dwelling upon the visions and prophecies. We shall, therefore, confine ourselves to such fragments as appear to us to be the most remarkable.*

One of the arguments most deserving of consideration is that which relates to the temporal possessions

* After we had begun to print this work we had the good fortune to meet with a manuscript which we had in vain sought for during many years. It is in the Magliabechian library, and is entitled *Giornate* (diaries), de Lorenzo Violi (Stanza i. scaf. i. palch. x. n. 32). *Apologia, per modo di dialogo, in difensione delle cose predicate dal Rev. P. F. Hieronymo Savonarola.*

of the Church, but upon which Savonarola does not state his full opinion; expecting, perhaps, that if a General Council should be held, he would there have a better opportunity. In these sermons he says distinctly, that the Church may possess temporalities; that they have sometimes been useful, and even necessary; but that now they are rather a burden and an injury. 'It is by riches that the Church has been corrupted.—What, Friar! do you mean to say that the Church ought not to have temporal possessions?—That would be heresy; I do not say so; because we cannot believe, if it could not hold them, that St. Silvester would have accepted them, or that St. Gregory would have confirmed that acceptance: therefore, we submit in this to the Church of Rome.—But tell us whether it is best to have them, or not to have them?—That is a great question; for we see that evil consequences have followed from those riches, which it is not necessary for me to prove. We reply, therefore, not absolutely; just as the mariner does not absolutely desire to throw his wealth into the sea, but solely to escape from shipwreck. So we say, that the Church would be better without riches, because it would thereby be in closer union with God. But I say to my reverend brethren—Keep fast by poverty; for when riches enter a house, death follows after.'* Following up the same line of argument, he declaimed tremendously against those seculars or priests who had ecclesiastical property, and made a bad use of it: 'Whoever have usurped such property, let them give it up to the Church of Christ, if they are to be considered good pastors; in other words, let them give it up to the poor, setting canons at defiance. Say what

* Sermons on Ezekiel above mentioned. It is necessary to notice that in this volume, the sermons preached in Advent and Lent are numbered continuously, but those in Advent finish with the eighth, and those in Lent begin with the ninth.

‘you will, Charity will always be my first canon. I tell you that it should be a fixed rule with you, that no canon can be in opposition to Charity. If it is so, it is no true canon.’*

In Savonarola’s mind, charity was an universal law, and conscience a supreme rule. He did not wish for any alteration of dogmas, and was far from thinking that a purely ecclesiastical reformation would be sufficient to correct the universal corruption in Christendom : it was necessary to re-awaken faith in the minds of men, to restore youth to their hearts. ‘What means all this war which is stirred up against me? what is the cause of it? No other than this—that I have brought to light the corruption of the wicked.† But I shall do as Friar Jacopone did in the Consistory, who, on being told that he must preach on some subject, turned round, and repeated three times—“Your sins are so great that I am amazed that the earth does not open and swallow you up.”’‡

The charges against Rome were the chief subject in many of the sermons preached in this Lent; and they had the greater weight, from a prevailing presentiment of the approach of a crisis in the long strife, of a revolt of all Christendom against the abominations practised at Rome. Nor did Savonarola ever hesitate to declare that he would put himself at the head of such a movement, in order to correct and reform the Church. ‘The earth is full of bloodshed,’ he said, addressing the priests; ‘and no one heeds it; but they rather, by their bad example, bring ruin on the soul of everyone. They are estranged from God; and their only worship is in passing entire nights with immoral

* Sermons 43 and 44, He means those who, having family livings, either disposed of them illegally, or made some one take orders who had no wish to do so.

† Sermon xix.

‡ Sermon xvii.

women, and the day spent in gossiping in the choir; so that the altar has been changed into the shop of the clergy. They affirm that God has no provident care of the world, that all goes on by chance; nor do they believe in the existence of God in the sacrament.* Come hither, thou profligate Church. I gave thee, saith the Lord, beautiful vestments, and ye have made idols of them. Ye have applied the sacred vessels to purposes of pride, the sacraments to simony: by your luxuries, ye have made yourselves shameless harlots; ye are worse than the beasts that perish; ye are monsters of abomination. Time was when ye blushed for your sins; but that shame is now all passed away. Time was when priests called their sons nephews; they are now no longer nephews, but acknowledged sons. Ye have established a public place, and have built in it a house of bad fame common to all. And what does the harlot herself? She sits on the throne of Solomon, and calls out to everyone—"He who has money may enter, and do what he lists;" he who seeks only for what is of good report is turned away. O Lord, Lord, they have no desire to do that which is good. And thou—O harlot Church!—thou hast made thy deformity apparent to all the world, and thy bad odour has ascended to heaven: thou hast multiplied thy fornications in Italy, in France, in Spain, in every country. Behold, I will stretch forth my hand, saith the Lord, and will come upon thee, thou degraded wicked one. My sword shall smite thy children, shall strike down thy infamous houses, thy harlots, and thy palaces, and my justice shall be made known. Heaven, earth, the angels, the good, even the wicked, will bring charges against thee;

* Sermon xxii. suspended. One of the charges which Savonarola brought most frequently against the clergy was their want of belief in transubstantiation; so far was he from that leaning to Protestantism which some would attribute to him.

no one will be on thy side ; I will deliver thee into the hands of those who hate thee.* O, ye priests and friars, how, by your bad example, ye have driven this people into the sepulchre of ceremonies. I tell you that this sepulchre must be broken up ; for it is the will of Christ that the Church shall be renovated in the Spirit. Do ye believe that St. Francis, St. Domenick, and other saints, have forgotten their religion, and do not pray for it ? We ought also, all of us, to pray for that renovation. Write to France, to Germany, to all places, that the Friar tells them that they should all pray to the Lord, that He may come to them. Up, then—send out messengers ! Ye think, perhaps, that we only are good—that there are no servants of God in other places ? Jesus Christ has many ; and there are many such in Germany, in France, and in Spain, who keep in concealment, and weep over this disease. There are to be found in all cities and strong places, in all villas and religious houses, many who are warmed by this flame. I have been sent to whisper something into your ear, and I have obeyed. Do ye keep in concealment until it shall be said to you, “ *Lazarus, come forth !* ” I stand in this place because the Lord hath sent me, and I wait until I am called. I shall then speak with a loud voice, which will be heard throughout Christendom, and will cause the body of the Church to tremble, as the voice of God made that of Lazarus to tremble.

‘ Many among you say that excommunications will be sent out ; but I again repeat to you that those in power are thinking of something else than excommunications. As for me, I pray thee, O Lord, that it may come quickly. —What ! have you then no fear of it ?—Not I, for they wish to excommunicate me because I do no evil. Let this excommunication be carried aloft upon a spear, and

* Sermon xxii.

let the gates be thrown open to receive it. I will answer it, and if I do not excite your wonder, say of me afterwards what you please. I shall make many faces on every side grow pale, and will send forth a voice that will make the world tremble and be moved.

‘I know full well that there is one at Rome who is daily at work to do me injury. But he is not actuated by zeal for religion, and does it solely because he is sunk in servility to mighty and great lords.* Some say, the Friar has given in, and sent one of his followers to Rome. I can tell you that the party at Rome does not do my bidding; and if flattery had been my habit, I should not at this day have been in Florence,† nor should I have a tattered gown, and I should have known how to escape from danger. But, O Lord, such things form no part of my desires; Thy cross is all I wish for; cause me to be persecuted; I ask this favour of Thee, that Thou wilt not allow me to die in my bed, but that I may shed my blood for Thee, as Thou didst shed Thine for me. Meanwhile, my sons, cast away doubt, for we shall surely have the support of the Lord.’‡

In this way the Lent sermons on Ezekiel were brought to a conclusion, Savonarola thus preparing the people for the great conflict that was about to take place, and for the General Council which he hoped to succeed in getting assembled. But, just as he was preparing to receive his excommunication, and to sustain a religious warfare with Rome, a new and unexpected danger threatened both him and the Republic. The Bigi party were showing an unusual degree of activity, causing no small uneasiness to the friends of the Liberal Government, who

* He refers here to Mariano da Gennazzano, whose secret plots we shall presently expose. But Savonarola was so unwilling to descend to personalities, that upon this occasion, perhaps the only one, he felt it necessary to apologise to the people for having too distinctly alluded to an individual; whom, after all, he did not name.

† He alludes here to the offer made him of a cardinal's hat.

‡ Sermon xxviii.

saw that, in the present temper of the people, any movement of the enemy might give rise to the greatest danger. Famine and dearness of provisions were constantly on the increase, and employment was decreasing; every day more families of the peasantry flocked into the city, begging by the way, and presenting a sad spectacle of misery. Many diseases were added to the famine, among which the plague began to have a very threatening aspect. The hospitals and public buildings were filled by the sick and the poor, to whom the private houses of the Piagnoni were most generously thrown open; notwithstanding all this, Nardi computes the number of those who died of starvation at some thousands; many of whom he himself saw falling down exhausted, along the walls by the roadside, and at the doors of shops.* Such a state of things presented a most favourable opportunity for the Medici, and while the Piagnoni were thinking of nothing else than to look after the poor people, the Bigi were wholly occupied with a secret conspiracy to bring back Piero de' Medici. One of the most active among them was that same friar Mariano da Gennazzano, whose hatred for Savonarola continued unextinguishable; he had done all he could to whet the rage of the Pope against him, and he now unexpectedly made his appearance in Florence. But before proceeding to narrate what the secret plots of the party were, and what the means Piero was employing to succeed in his attempt, we will describe the sort of life he had been leading, and the schemes he was plotting. By good chance we have a most minute account of them by a certain Lamberto dell' Antella,† who had taken an active part in these schemes, and was thoroughly acquainted

* Nardi, *Storia di Firenze*, p. 115.

† At a later period of our narrative we shall have to speak of this Lamberto and of his connection with Piero.

with the dispositions and habits of all those who were engaged in them.

After the failure of his attempt in the preceding year, to enter Florence with an armed force, Piero losing all hopes, having few friends, and being without funds, retired to Rome, where he gave himself up to the most profligate and scandalous course of life. He never rose from his bed until it was time for dinner, having first sent to the kitchen to ascertain whether that which was making ready would please his taste; if dissatisfied, he went to the hotel San Severino, where a sumptuous repast was laid out every day, and there he passed the greater part of his time. When dinner was over he shut himself up in an apartment with one of the women he found in the house (so Antella relates), and remained with her until after supper, when he went out with some men of loose character and empty heads to do some mischief in the streets; passed the night in rioting, and an hour before daybreak went home to his wife. Gratifying his palate, gaming, lust, and every vice contrary to nature, were the occupations of his life. Of all his passions pride was the most violent, accompanied by a desire to oppress and domineer over others. He seemed to expect everyone about him to be subservient to him, and to be willing that he should tyrannise over them at his pleasure. Nor did he ever show a spark of gratitude to his attendants; no fidelity, no labour, no danger encountered for him, were any guarantee against his insolent and brutal manners. There was a certain Francesco del Nero, who had undertaken, at his desire, to travel over Italy, and had collected for him considerable sums of money, and was serving him with all imaginable fidelity; but Piero, having become tired of him had the audacity to ask Lamberto dell' Antella to contrive some way or other to put him to death. In his own house there were always some old and faithful servants,

of whom, when he wanted their services, he took great account; but so soon as he had no longer any need of them, he treated them worse than brutes, and when he wished to get them out of his way he did not hesitate to have recourse to poison. Nor was that brutal conduct confined to his servants only; he did not refrain from it with anyone, and even with his own brother, the Cardinal,* for in the presence of many people he did not hesitate to address him in language that would have been unjustifiable towards the meanest of his attendants; so that they were on the eve of a separation. Notwithstanding this, however, when the cardinal received any money, Piero did all he could to obtain a part, which in two or three days he threw away in gaming or some other vicious manner.

By such a course of life he was reduced to the necessity of pledging his jewels, plate, and tapestry; was loaded with debts, on which he had to pay 20 per cent. of interest; and according to a saying at the time, every florin that he spent cost him eight lire.† Nevertheless Piero did not cease to indulge the hope that he should one day get back to Florence; and he revelled in the thought of the vengeance he could then take, and of the blood that would be shed. He kept a list of all the families he intended to ruin, whose homes he would level to the ground, and whose property he would confiscate to his own use. When the Emperor came to Pisa, the hopes of the Medici began to revive, and when the cardinal happened one day to be at Bolsena, and was talking of the possibility of their being recalled, he ventured to say that the banishments and confiscations of 1434‡ and the number of those put to death in 1478§ would be a

* Giovanni de' Medici, afterwards Leo X.

† The relative value of florins and lire was constantly changing; but at that time a florin was worth from 5 to 6 lire.

‡ The recall of Cosmo.

§ The conspiracy of the Pazzi.

jest compared with what would then take place; as they would take good care that their number should be such as would secure the Medici from being ever again expelled from Florence. The course Piero proposed to take was to spend the whole income of the state upon two large armies of mercenaries, to be placed under the command of Orsini and Alviano, and in this way he hoped to make his vengeance secure. He appealed to all the potentates of Italy, praying them to support his cause; for he was particularly desirous to enter Florence with foreign troops only, so as to avoid coming under an obligation to any of the citizens, or be forced to govern by their aid or advice: the thing of all others he most abhorred. One day, as he was talking in his room with some friends about the wished-for return to Florence, and, as often happens in such cases, it appearing to everyone as if the object was already obtained, Ludovico de San Miniato turning to him, said—‘ You will establish a noble state; and, with the sound and good advice of some twenty-five or thirty citizens, you will form a council, and govern the land as you please.’ Upon which Piero, with a very indecorous gesture, replied—‘ You ought to have known that I do not desire the advice of anyone; and I would rather do a thing badly by following my own judgement, than well by following that of another.’ Such were the habits and such the intentions of the man whom the powers of Italy were trying to re-establish in Florence; and at the time at which we are arrived fortune seemed to hold out to them a favourable opportunity.

During the strife between the Arrabbiati and the Piagnoni, the Bigi had managed to acquire an increase of strength; for by keeping always united among themselves, and by leaning, sometimes to one side, and sometimes to the other, they became very often masters of the election to the Consiglio Mag-

giore. Thus in the choice of the Signory for March and April of this year, they succeeded in getting Bernardo del Nero chosen Gonfaloniere di Giustizia, a man of much authority and prudence, but who had always been a creature of the Medici, and was most anxious for their return; or, at all events, to establish an oligarchical form of government.*

The election was scarcely over when the Bigi suddenly exhibited a joy they in vain tried to conceal. A special messenger was sent off secretly from Florence with orders to ride with all speed to Rome to announce the election to Piero; who, rousing himself from his lethargy, wrote immediately to the allies, and to his friends and relations, urging them to collect men, arms, and money. His application was favourably received by the Pope, the Venetians and by others; but the Duke of Milan still cherished his old rancour against Piero.† Many of the young men in Florence, who were the most eager among his partisans, urged his coming by letters and frequent messengers, promising that so soon as he made his appearance the whole city would rise in favour of the Medici. In consequence of being thus aided and encouraged, Piero collected together about 1,300 men, whom he placed under the command of Bartolommeo d'Alviano, a young man of whom great hopes were entertained in the Italian armies; but just as they were about to move, and when the term of office of the Signory, which supported him, was about to expire, Bernardo del Nero sent a recommendation to him to suspend his movement, as he believed that the attempt would at that time encounter many difficulties. Piero,

* Guicciardini, *Storia di Firenze*; *Storia d' Italia*, Nardi, Parenti, Pitti, &c.

† 'Piero, emboldened by these things, obtained the favour of the League, except that of the Duke of Milan.' Guicciardini, *Storia di Firenze*, c. xv.

however, after the sacrifices he had made and the hopes he entertained, would not rest quiet, and receiving from other friends letters of great encouragement and urgency, he determined to tempt fortune at all risks.

About the 20th of April he marched to Siena, where he found Pandolfo Petrucci, who was then almost the lord of that republic, quite disposed in his favour. After a short rest, and disposing his forces in due order, he took the road to Florence on the 27th of that month. They advanced with such rapidity that two hours before sunrise of the 28th they had reached the monastery of San Gaggio, expecting that at break of day the gate of S. Pier Gattolini (now the Porta Romana) would be opened, and that he would be received into the city with acclamation. But during the night a very heavy rain fell near Tavernelle, about sixteen miles from Florence; and while he halted there to refresh his wearied men and horses, they, as a precaution, stopped and sent back everyone who was going towards the city. A peasant finding himself driven back by armed horsemen, in such a place, and at such an hour, suspected that Piero de' Medici might be with them; and by taking cross-roads he reached the gate when it was first opened for the day, and was able to inform the custom-house officers of all that had happened to him. They took him straightway to the Signory, and they had scarcely reached the Palazzo when the whole city had learned the news. The people rose in arms, and the Signory found themselves all of a sudden obliged to close the gates, and plant over them the few pieces of ordnance that were ready. Bernardo del Nero endeavoured to conceal the true state of his mind by showing himself as one of the most active in preparations for defence; and as the people had begun to have strong suspicions, it was thought better not to call out the Gonfalonieri, but rather to place arms in the hands

of those who were known to be the most steady friends of liberty, and who instantly hastened to guard the gates.*

While all this was going on, when the confusion was at its height, and universal terror had spread through the city, Filippo Arrigucci, one of the Signory, and entirely devoted to Savonarola, sent Girolamo Benivieni to him to inform him of what was going on. Benivieni himself tells us, that the Friar no sooner saw him enter his cell than, without giving him an opportunity of uttering a word, he said, '*O ye of little faith, wherefore do ye doubt?*† Go tell the Signory, that Piero de' Medici will arrive at the gates, and will have to turn back without having obtained any success.'

The fact was, that day had scarcely dawned when Piero advanced to the gate, and to his great surprise found it still closed. When he afterwards perceived that the small guns on the walls were about to fire upon him, he concealed himself behind a wall, where he waited in vain for the expected rising in his favour within the city. There he remained the whole day; and although at the head of 1,300 well-armed men, he had not the courage to draw a sword, but showed himself, to the inhabitants of that suburb, a miserable object of mockery for his cowardice. Feeling at length persuaded that there was no movement in his favour in the city, and fearing that the Florentine troops before Pisa might attack him in the rear, he turned back suddenly, with a rapidity more like a flight than a retreat; for before it was yet day he had reached the Sienese territory.

After this event Piero could no longer have any hope of returning to Florence. His fortune was now ruined

* For all the particulars here given see Nardi, Guicciardini, Cerretani, Parenti, Pitti, Sismondi, &c.

† Gospel of St. Matthew, xiv. 21.—TR.

for ever ; in the attempts he had made in the past year he had experience of the value to be placed on the faith and assistance of his allies ; and although there were at the head of the Government some of those who favoured his cause, he had seen how little foundation there was for the hopes held out to him by his partisans in Florence. There, however, matters were very far from being tranquil ; on the contrary, there were many changes and many disorders. A suspicion had arisen in the minds of many, that designs in favour of the Medici were formed in the Signory itself, which gave rise to much uneasiness and awoke new hatreds. It was therefore prudently resolved that the fact should be kept quiet, until the evidence of it should be so clear as to justify some sanguinary example. A new Signory was elected on the very day that the attempt of Piero was made ; the Otto were required to watch his movements : Francesco Valori, who was one of those magistrates, and Tommaso Tosinghi, who was one of the Dieci, were directed to trace the thread of the conspiracy, hatched within the city ; and matters were left in this state for a while, not, however, without the danger of new and still greater disorders.

CHAPTER II.

SAVONAROLA'S SERMON ON ASCENSION DAY, AND THE TUMULTS WHICH TOOK PLACE—HIS EXCOMMUNICATION, AND ANSWER THERETO—THE PLAGUE, AFTER HAVING BEEN AT A GREAT HEIGHT, BEGINS TO DIMINISH.

THE new attempt of Piero de' Medici having failed, the party of the Bigi quickly declined, and their bitter enemies, the Arrabbiati, became quite in the ascendant. The new Signory was almost wholly composed of them, and Piero degli Alberti, one of their leaders, was chosen Gonfaloniere di Giustizia. They no sooner found themselves masters of the field than they began earnestly to strengthen their own party and weaken that of their adversaries; but as the Bigi had fallen sufficiently low, they directed their whole enmity against Savonarola and the popular party. In this they were greatly favoured by the Duke of Milan, and still more by the Pope, who now denied that he had given any support to Piero de' Medici;* promised his favour to the Arrabbiati, and every assistance for the extinction of the Friar. They, therefore, set vigorously to work; and the first to begin were the Compagnacci, under the leadership of Doffo Spini, a youth of depraved habits, but of great boldness of character. They met at luxurious banquets, and, amidst their revellings, invented new snares for Savonarola. He, in the meanwhile, was shut up in St. Mark's, abstaining from public preaching, so

* Borgia did not hesitate to say, 'that the support had been given without his knowledge or consent.' See a letter to Lorenzo di Filippo Strozzi, written by Antonio, *servo suo*, dated May 20, 1497. Magliabechian library, cl. xxxiv. cod. 288.

that they could do no more against him than placard the walls of the convent with offensive libels, and endeavour by brawling and all kinds of noises to interrupt the services of the mass and the Friar's discourses, and insult those who were going to the church; watching opportunities for greater violence.*

One soon presented itself, for Savonarola had determined that on Ascension Day (4th May) the people should not be left by him without a sermon. There was, therefore, much excitement in both parties; the Arrabbiati made preparations to prevent the sermon being preached, the Piagnoni for hearing it; the latter armed themselves in defence of the Friar, the former to attack him. The Compagnacci, to whom the principal part in the commission of those enormities was assigned, had determined that on that day he should either be murdered or receive some serious injury. Ten of them had made an agreement with a man named Baia, a maker of fireworks, to have the pulpit blown up in the middle of the sermon; but they afterwards gave up that plot, on reflecting upon the great injuries that it might occasion to the multitude with which the church would be crammed, and the very great odium they would bring upon their party by the perpetration of such wickedness. They therefore scattered all kinds of filth in the pulpit, spread the hide of an ass upon it, and drove sharp iron spikes into those parts which Savonarola, in the warmth of his discourse, was in the habit of striking. All this was low, and, at the same time, useless, but they hoped to raise a tumult, in the midst of which they might find an opportunity of carrying their plot into effect.†

* Violi gives a minute description of Doffo Spini. See the manuscript in the Magliabechian library, cl. xxxiv. cod. 288.

† Nardi, *Storia di Firenze*; Parenti, idem; Burlamacchi, *Vita*, &c.; Barsanti, idem; Violi, *Le Giornate*, &c.

Meanwhile a thousand voices in the city exclaimed against and exaggerated the evil designs of the Compagnacci; some said that the pulpit had been poisoned by an invisible powder; others that the Friar was to be assassinated while preaching; this one said one thing, that one said another. Wagers were laid whether Savonarola would or would not preach, to such an extent and such an amount that the Signory found it necessary to declare them null and void, by two decrees, and by a third, on the 3rd of May, they ordered that no one should be prevented from preaching on Ascension Day.* Nevertheless, the friends of Savonarola went to his cell and entreated him not to put his life in jeopardy by preaching on that day; but he replied with noble indignation, 'I cannot through fear of man leave the people without a sermon on the day in which the Lord commanded his disciples to go and spread his doctrine throughout the world.' His friends therefore found that there was nothing left for them but to get ready an armed force for his protection.

At dawn of day, the Piagnoni went to the Duomo, cleansed the pulpit, had it planed, and put in order. Savonarola set out from his convent a little before twelve o'clock, and reached the church under the escort of some of the most faithful of his friends. A dense mass of the people was collected, and behind them were seen the Compagnacci, standing together, without showing any symptom of fear. They were in their usual costly and perfumed attire, looking on with an impudent smile of contempt and scorn; a striking contrast to the modest simplicity and devotion of the Piagnoni.† At length the Friar mounted the pulpit. He began his sermon by discoursing on the power of faith. 'Faith,'

* These decrees may be seen in the *Archivio delle Riformazioni*.

† These facts are minutely stated by Violi, Burlamacchi; and the other biographers.

he said, 'can do all things, can overcome all things, and regards the life on this earth with indifference, being secure of that in heaven. The times that were foretold are now near at hand; we are even in the hour of danger; and it will be seen who is truly devoted to the Lord. The wicked believed that they could prevent me from preaching this day; but they know that I have never failed, through fear of man, to do my duty. There is not on this earth a man, be he great or little, who can boast of having seen me so fail. I am quite prepared to lay down my life for my duty. O Lord, free me from those adversaries who call me a seducer; set my soul free: for my body I have no fear. I call the Lord, the Virgin, the Angels and the Saints, to witness, that the things revealed by me come from God; that I have received them by Divine inspiration in long-protracted vigils, for the good of this same people who are now plotting against me.'

After a long general introduction on faith, he directed his discourse to those whom he considered to be the good: 'Ye despair for a very little, ye are sad when ye should rejoice. Tribulations are approaching; there will be a war of excommunications, of swords, and of martyrdom; the days of trial are now come. It is the will of God that I should be the first to meet them. I have made it known that I should experience much ingratitude, and that the lukewarm will do with me as his brethren did with Joseph, who sold him to the Egyptian merchants. There are those who call out that I am no prophet; but they do all they can to fulfil my prophecies. I again tell you that Italy will be laid waste by barbarous nations; and when they make peace with one another, destruction upon destruction will be the fate of perverse Italy. But do you, ye pious, offer up your prayers, and the Lord will help you.

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‘And now, ye evil-minded’—at this a loud murmur was heard throughout the church—‘O Lord, be not angry with them; forgive them, convert them, for they know not what they do. Ye wicked ones, ye think that ye are in conflict with the Friar, while ye are warring against God; therefore, I fight with you, not from any hatred I bear towards you, but from the love I bear to the Lord. Ye say that I sow discord; Christ also came to make war among men. Why turn ye not to virtue, that then there may be peace?—Friar, thou oughtest not to be preaching, for the Signory has forbidden thee.—That is not true; neither ought I to abstain from preaching through fear, or by command of man. I shall be silent only when my sermon could do harm, when I might fear its giving rise to dissension.’

At that moment, as if they would take him at his word, a tremendous crash was heard throughout the church. The doors were thrown open, and the people fled with precipitation; the noise, the disorder, the confusion, was such that it seemed as if the *Duomo* were falling to pieces. The *Compagnacci* had begun the tumult. Francesco Cei, one of them, threw down the alms-chest on the ground, while, at the same moment, another beat a drum; some knocked on the benches, and some threw open the doors. The mass of the people took to flight; but a few remained round the pulpit to protect Savonarola; while others ran to the adjoining street, the *Via Cocomero*, to get arms, which they had left in the houses of Francesco Tosinghi and of the rich Cambi;* and they, in number about sixty, and armed with spears, returned in haste, panting for breath, to guard the pulpit. At the first sight of those armed men, who were thought to be *Arrabbiati*, the disorder became indescribable; so

* He was so called to distinguish him from many others of the same surname in Florence.

that no one could move backwards or forwards. Whereupon, Bartolommeo Giugni and Giuliano Mazzinghi, two of the Otto, believing themselves safe under the dignity of their office, advanced towards the pulpit with the intention of slaying Savonarola. But he was sufficiently well protected, and Giugni received from Carbizzo da Castrocaro a sharp slap in the face: an affront never before offered to one of the Otto.

Savonarola attempted, but in vain, to raise his voice amid the infernal din and confusion, crying—‘Ah, the wicked ones! they are unwilling to listen to what affects them. Wait; have patience!’ Then, holding up his crucifix, he exclaimed—‘Trust in this; fear nothing.’ But seeing that all was in vain, for no one would listen to him, he fell on his knees to pray; and when the tumult had a little subsided, he came down from the pulpit, and got among his followers, who received him with loud acclamations of joy. Some held up their swords and spears, others the crosses they held in their hands; and all, calling out *Viva Cristo*, accompanied him to St. Mark’s. There, in the convent garden, among his own friars, he added a few sentences to conclude the sermon which had been interrupted. ‘The later,’ he said, ‘the hand of the Lord shall come upon them so much the more severe will it be, in rendering to everyone according to his works. The wicked will not believe—they will not hear; but they will be thrown into the ditch they have digged for themselves; they are sapping the foundation of a wall which will fall upon them. I will sing praises unto the Lord, and will depart joyfully from this life.’* This sermon of the Ascension, as it was called (*Predica dell’ Ascensione*), soon spread all over Italy. Girolamo

* The account of this fact we have derived not only from the biographers and historians above quoted, but also from some private letters existing in the Magliabechian library.

Cinozzi, had had sufficient composure in the midst of the tumult to note it down; and he published it, along with a faithful account of what had occurred before his eyes, adding the concluding part spoken at St. Mark's.* It was the subject of common talk at Florence, Rome, and throughout Italy: and everyone expected that it would lead to something very important in its consequences.

Savonarola, in the meantime, had published a new letter, entitled, *To all the Elect of God and Faithful Christians*.† In this he said: 'We have determined to imitate the Lord, who many times gave way to anger; but, nevertheless, we shall now abstain from preaching. But in order that the work of God may not be neglected, and that the wicked may not rejoice, we shall say in this letter what it has not been permitted to us to speak openly. Be not disturbed by persecutions, but rather rejoice in them. All our prophecies are being fulfilled: first, we have been calumniated; then our enemies, by indirect means, have endeavoured to get us excommunicated; and, not succeeding in that, they have attempted to put us to death. Not a drop of blood has been shed; for the Lord, knowing our weakness, has not allowed us to be put to a trial beyond our strength; but by little and little, as tribulations multiply, he will add faith, virtue, and courage for greater things. Thus we are prepared for heavier persecutions; so that men, amazed at our steadfastness, begin to think that we are sustained by the certainty of a better life than this, and for which they begin to have hopes.

* This small work, several editions of which were printed at the time, S.L.A. has supplied the materials for the authentic and minute account of the fact, as described by an eye witness. Its exact title is *Predica del Venerando P.F. Hieronymo da Ferrara, facta la mattina dell' Ascensione* 1497. Prefixed to it is a preface which begins, 'Hieronymus Cinoctius Barnabe Rodiano suo salute.' Cinozzi also wrote a short life of Savonarola; it exists in manuscript in the Riccardian library.

† See Quetif, vol. ii. p. 170.

Our tribulations, therefore, in spite of the will of those who cause them, will serve to spread this light. We thank the Lord that, in times such as these, when so little faith is to be found, He has raised us up for such a purpose. And if you are deprived of the word of God, by the fault of those who have been willing to be guilty of dissensions, on the very day on which the Lord commanded His disciples to go forth to the world to preach, pray to the Almighty that He will deign to open anew the mouths of his preachers; for, when He commandeth, there is no power that can resist.'

The strength of the party of the Arrabbiati increased daily, and the Frateschi were more and more oppressed. The authors of the tumult were allowed to go unpunished, while many of the popular party were put to the torture by the Otto, who, appointed to suppress all disorders, were the very persons who had fomented them. The Signory, besides, issued a proclamation forbidding any friar to preach, whatever might be the order to which he belonged.* At a long sitting, on the 20th of May, while they were deliberating by what means peace might be re-established among the citizens, they endeavoured to obtain their consent to a sentence of banishment against Savonarola: this, however, they were obliged to drop, for they very soon saw that it would give rise to a serious and bitter hatred among the Florentine people against them.† Nevertheless, the

* Burlamacchi, Nardi, Parenti, Barsanti, Cinozzi, Violi. See also the Deliberations in the *Archivio delle Riformazioni*.

† This fact is also noticed in a Letter to Lorenzo di Filippo Strozzi, written by Antonio suo servo, dated May 20, 1497. 'In the city, as you know, the rumours respecting the Friar have become many, and things appear as if they would lead, in the end, to show what is felt. In order to prevent the mischief that might arise from it, a large meeting was held this morning; and the Signory and others, as I hear, are doing all they can to restore peace among the citizens and to do away with those parties of Frateschi and non Frateschi, which have been and are so dishonourable to the city, both publicly and privately; and in this pacifica-

Arrabbiati did not lose courage; they had other and much greater hopes. They expected from day to day the arrival of the letter of excommunication, the issuing of which the Pope had hitherto suspended, until he saw the result of the attempt of Piero de' Medici; and he, perhaps, also hoped to have further grounds for this step from what might happen on Ascension Day, of which Mariano da Gennazzano would take care to keep him well informed. As soon as the conspiracy of the Medici failed, that man had fled to Rome, where he now was, doing all he could to excite the Pope to cause the ruin of Savonarola, for whom he had no other name than Devil's tool, and the curse of the Florentine people. But Borgia did not require Frà Mariano to instil hate and venom into his soul. While the proceeding of Savonarola on Ascension Day enraged him, as an act of fresh audacity on the part of the Friar, it served to show the weakness of his followers at that time, and how powerful his enemies had become; the Pope therefore thought that the moment had arrived when the excommunication brief, which was nearly ready, should be dispatched.

At the same time Savonarola, feeling that the tempest was thickening over his head, sought to dispel it by a letter addressed to Borgia, dated the 22nd of May. In this, in a mild, but at the same time dignified tone, he began with these words:—'From what cause does my Lord show anger against his servant?' and continuing, he lamented that the Holy Father had never listened to him, but, on the contrary, had leant a willing ear to the lying accusations of his enemies: the falseness of which his sermons delivered in public, and printed, gave such ample evidence. He then complained bitterly of the impudent audacity of Gennazzano, who had

tion, it seems to be understood that the Friar will be sent into exile.'—*Magliab., cl. xxxiv. 288.*

himself made a personal attack on the Pope, in words unworthy of his sacred calling, and for which he had been reproved by Savonarola before the people; that he had perfidiously brought those same charges against him who had never attacked any man personally, much less the prince of the faithful, the vicar of Christ. He renewed his declaration of submission to the Church, and that he had never preached any other doctrine than that of the Holy Fathers, which would very soon be made known to all the world by his '*Triumph of the Cross*;' and he thus concluded: 'if I shall fail to attain human aid, I shall rest my hope in God, and I shall make manifest to the whole world the unkindness of those who may perhaps repent their hostile acts against me?'

But when this letter was written, the sentence of excommunication had already been passed. The brief was sent off from Rome on the 17th of May, but by a singular chance everything seemed to concur to lessen its efficiency. It was in the form of a letter addressed to the Friars of the Church of the Annunziata, as if the Pope had been afraid of the usual form of direction, 'to all believers.' It was given in charge to a theologian named Giovanni de Camerino, who, on his arrival at Siena, remained there some days hesitating whether to proceed. At length, yielding to a fear, that he might be cut in pieces by the followers of Savonarola, he turned back, giving the brief to another person to deliver; and thus it did not reach Florence until near the end of May; when many of the clergy refused to publish it, because no apostolic commissioner had charge of it, as established usage required: nevertheless it was fixed up in the principal churches in each of the quarters of the city.*

The contents of this brief, or letter, whichever we may

* Violi, Burlamacchi, Pico, Barsanti, Marchese, Nardi, Parenti, &c.

choose to call it, to the *Padri Serviti*, were not less extraordinary than its form. The Holy Father thus expresses himself: 'We have heard from persons deserving of credit, that *a certain* Frà Girolamo Savonarola, at present, as we have been told, the vicar of St. Mark's, in Florence, has been disseminating pernicious doctrine to the scandal and injury of the souls of simple-minded persons. We commanded him, in fulfilment of sacred obedience, that he should cease his sermons, and come to us, that he might purge himself of his errors; he was, however, unwilling to obey, and, instead of that, made some excuses, which we, with too great benignity, did accept,* hoping that our clemency might convert him. But as he persisted in the same obstinate spirit, we commanded him, in a second brief,† under pain of excommunication, to unite the Convent of St. Mark with the Tusco-Roman congregation, recently established by us. Even then he continued obstinate in the same pernicious spirit, rendering himself therefore *ipso facto* liable to censure. We therefore now command you, that, on all festivals, and on the presence of the people, ye shall declare the said Frà Girolamo to be excommunicated, and that he shall be held as such by everyone, *inasmuch as he has not obeyed our apostolic admonitions and commands*. And everyone is prohibited, under the like penalty, to render him any assistance, to have any communication with him, or express anything in his praise, whether by word or deed, as a person excommunicated, and *suspected* of heresy. Given in Rome this 12th day of May, 1497.'‡

Thus, after all the numerous charges against the

* Here it will be seen how true it was that Savonarola had said, that the Pope had accepted his excuses for not going to Rome.

† That of November 7, 1496.

‡ See this brief in Appendix M. Padre Marchese seems to doubt whether this was the true brief, as it is not in due form; we shall elsewhere revert to that question.

doctrine of the Friar, the Pope declared him to be simply *suspected*, and that only from what he had heard said of him; thus confessing, by implication, that he had not examined the charges. The excommunication, therefore, could only be justified by his disobedience in not uniting the Convent of St. Mark to the newly-established Tusco-Roman congregation. That union, after all, as we have shown above, was only a pretext for imposing silence on the Friar; and he, with very cogent reasons, had refused obedience; demonstrating to the Pope, that he not only had no right to make such an union, but also that it would have been contrary to his duty to have done so, because of the very serious injury it might cause to his convent; added to which, compliance did not rest with the Prior only, but with the whole body of friars of St. Mark's. Be it, however, as it may, the excommunication made it clear to all the world, that the Church was not able to pronounce the doctrine of Savonarola to be heretical; that as to his not going to Rome, the Pope had admitted his excuses, and therefore could not charge him with disobedience, even in a matter of very little importance, and one on which the Pope had many times issued orders and counter-orders, and which had been put forward as a mere pretext.

Savonarola, in the meanwhile, without any undue haste, was preparing for his defence. On the 19th of June he wrote a *Letter against surreptitious Excommunication, to all Christians and the beloved of God* (*Epistola contro la scomunica surrettizia, a tutti i Cristiani e diletta a Dio*). This letter, after repeating the things already so often asserted against his doctrine, concludes thus: 'Let not the lukewarm be afraid, for this excommunication is invalid before God and man, proceeding upon false reasons and charges invented by our enemies. I have always submitted, and do now

submit myself, to the judgement of the Church, and shall never fail in due obedience to her; but we ought not to obey commands that are contrary to charity and to the law of the Lord; for in that case our superiors are no longer representatives of God. Do you, meanwhile, make ready, with prayer, for the course which you ought to take; and we ourselves, should the matter be proceeded in, will make the truth known to the whole world.’* In a second letter *Against the Sentence of Excommunication*, he proved, by long quotations from Gerson, that there was no reason to fear an unjust condemnation, and that a willingness to submit to any sentence ‘*is an asinine patience, a leporine and silly timidity.*’ He continued, still quoting the words of Gerson, to discuss the question of an appeal from the Pope to a General Council. After this, while expressing himself with some hesitation, he however declared, that to resist the Pope when he was making use of his authority to the destruction of the Church, was not only allowable, but a duty. ‘Nor will a Christian be guilty of sin’—he continued to quote the words of Gerson—‘when, in order to avoid an unjust excommunication, he avails himself of the secular power; for unjust sentences are nothing less than violence, and our natural rights lead us to repel force by force. And that would be especially justifiable, when due care has been taken to prevent any scandal arising, and to enlighten the pusillanimous, who believe that the Pope has power both over heaven and earth. It is very right to be humble and courteous to the Pope; but when the end is not gained by that humility, then *a courageous liberty must be resorted to.*’ To this conclusion of Gerson, Savonarola added for himself: ‘All this comes admirably in support of our cause; nevertheless, so

* This letter is given by Quetif, vol. ii. p. 188.

great is the ignorance of man in the present day, that many will believe not only that we ourselves, but also all those who come to the convent, are excommunicated; others, still more ignorant, affirm that it is necessary to avoid all intercourse with those who frequent our church. Such persons know not that Martin V. declared in the Council of Constance, and it was confirmed in that of Basle, that the faithful are not obliged to avoid those who have been excommunicated, unless they have been expressly named in the sentence.*

At length the excommunication was published with great solemnity in Florence, on the 22nd of June. All the clergy, together with the minor friars, those of Santa Croce, of Santa Maria Novella, Santo Spirito, the Black Monks, and the Franciscans, assembled in the cathedral, where, accompanied by the tolling of bells and with lighted tapers, the brief was solemnly read; after which, all the lights were extinguished, and all remained in darkness and silence.

It would be difficult to form an idea of the things said, of the confusion and tumults in Florence, to which the proclamation of the sentence gave rise. Two days afterwards, the 24th of June, was St. John's Day, and the Augustine and Franciscan monks declared that they would not be present at the religious celebrations, if the Friars of St. Mark's took any part in them. An order was therefore given that they, as well as the Dominican Friars of Fiesole, should on that day be confined to their respective convents. The audacity of the Compagnacci, encouraged as it was by the Signory, composed entirely of Arrabbiati, had free scope, so that licentiousness in words and deeds spread throughout the city. There was a general abuse of Savonarola, and a vast

* See Quetif, vol. ii. p. 191.

number of anonymous sonnets, canzoni and ballads, in ridicule of his doctrines, were published. At night, when the friars were chanting the services in the convent, they were disturbed by persons shouting, singing, and even throwing stones. And as the magistrates did not interfere, matters became worse from day to day, and the lamentable effects increased without any check. Profligacy was established as if by incantation, the churches were empty, the taverns full; women came forth wearing indecent dresses, and their hitherto hidden jewels, and new ornaments of excessive luxury, were to be seen everywhere; perfumed youths went about singing carnival songs under the windows of their mistresses, who no longer blushed when hearing them. In less than one month the days of Lorenzo the Magnificent seemed to have come back, and all thoughts of patriotism and liberty were forgotten. These were the first fruits of the brief of Alexander Borgia.*

But the Government in Florence was subject to a continual round of changes, and it very soon got into other hands. The election of the Signory for July and August was favourable to Savonarola, and on the first days of entering upon their office they began to take measures at Rome for a recall of the excommunication. The Pope had evinced a disposition to submit the Friar's doctrine to the examination of six cardinals, and the Signory wrote as early as the 2nd of July to their ambassador, Alessandro Bracci, directing him to encourage that idea, believing that no objection could be stated against the doctrine. And again, on the 8th of the same month,† they directed him to support the cause with all earnestness, and they enclosed a letter to the Pope, in the

* All this is minutely described by Nardi, Violi, Burlamacchi, Barsanti, &c.

† These letters are among the documents published by the Padre Marchese.

following terms :— ‘ Most Holy Father,— We have been deeply affected by the Papal censures, not only from the respect the Republic has always had for the sacred keys, but because we have seen malignant persons wrongfully accuse a most innocent man before your Holiness. We respect that good man, who is both religious and most learned in all Christian things. He has for many years laboured for the good of our people, nor has it ever been possible to find a single fault either in his doctrine or his life. But envy is never wanting against the virtuous, and there are among our people many who misrepresent the honest, and who seek to earn distinction by an audacious persecution of good men. We therefore most earnestly implore your Holiness that, with paternal and divine charity, you will yourself be judge in this matter, and remove the heavy penalty of this censure, not only from Savonarola, but from all those on whom it may have fallen. Your holiness could confer no greater favour on the Republic, especially in this time of pestilence, when censures bring with them danger of so grave a kind upon the souls of men.’ *

A most earnest correspondence of the Republic in defence of Savonarola continued throughout the year, for by good fortune the changes in the Signory were all in his favour, and the magistrates composing the Court of the Dieci had always been most devoted to him.† Alessandro Bracci followed up his instructions

* See the letter itself in Quetif and in the Padre Marchese.

† The magistrates wrote many other letters. In one of July 21 they gave much praise to Bracci and to a Signor Ricciardo, for the care they had bestowed on bringing over the cardinals in favour of Savonarola, and they urged them to persevere, for they said that the opposers of his cause were many. They wrote again on August 1, praising the ambassador, and expressing their joy that his Holiness was showing himself ‘ kind and propitious towards them.’ They also sent letters of thanks to the Cardinals of Capaccio and Perugia, for having co-operated in favour of the cause. On August 11 they recommended Bracci to make every

with all his power, and won over to the cause the Cardinals of Perugia, Benevento, and Capaccio, besides making an earnest appeal to the Cardinal of Naples, who had always been a most warm friend of the Convent of St. Mark. He availed himself also of the assistance of Giorgio Benigno and Giovanni Nasi, who were then residing at Rome, and who, both by their speaking and writing, had always been defenders of Savonarola. While efforts were thus being made on all sides, and not without some hope of success, to soften the anger of the Pope, and induce him to show some degree of mildness, a most extraordinary offer was made to the Friar by the Cardinal of Siena, afterwards Pius the Third. He let it be made known to him, that upon the sum of 5,000 crowns being paid to one of his creditors he would get the censure removed. It was a proposal by no means either novel or strange, for in Rome everything was then a marketable commodity. But Savonarola, as may well be believed, rejected the impudent offer with scorn; and writing to a friend he said, 'I should consider it by far the greater censure to have purchased my redemption at such a price.* It was a proof that the Holy Father had given some signs of a disposition to yield, and it gave the Friar some ground for hope.

While these things were proceeding, there occurred one of those atrocious tragedies by which the Borgia family had excited in those days so much and such

possible effort to dispose the cardinals, who had charge of ecclesiastical affairs to be favourable, as the cause was likely to be brought before them. On September 26 they wrote to Cardinal Caraffa, urging him to use his influence with the Pope, and on September 28 directed Bracci to apply to Cardinal Caraffa; they sent two letters to the same effect, one on October 13, the other on November 7, which we shall notice hereafter. See the documents published by Padre Marchese.

* Letter to Lodovico Pittorio, secretary of Duke Hercules I. of Ferrara. It is given by Marchese. The fact of the offer is mentioned by Burlamacchi, Barsanti, Souveges, and has recently been confirmed by Marchese.

general horror, and which is one of the most infamous in the history of the human race. The Duke of Candia, the Pope's eldest son, was assassinated in the night and thrown into the Tiber. His brother, the Cardinal of Valenza, was the author of the crime, moved by jealousy and a criminal passion for their sister Lucretia, and by an unbridled ambition of power, not being able to tolerate any rival in his designs. The monstrous and unheard-of deed caused profound grief to Alexander Borgia, who for the first and only time in his life seemed to repent of his manifold crimes, and to determine to lead a better life. He observed a strict seclusion, and nominated a commission of cardinals to remedy the many evils with which the Church was then afflicted and desolated.*

Savonarola was unwilling to let the opportunity be lost, and on the 1st of July he wrote a letter to the Pope, in which, after offering his condolence, he encouraged the holy purpose of amendment, and then adverted to his own cause. 'Most blessed Father,' he said, 'an entire faith in miracles and heavenly works, confirmed by the blood of martyrs, can alone give tranquillity and consolation to the heart of man. It transcends all sense and all reason, it raises us above the world, it carries us to things that are now invisible, it enlarges our mind, it enables us to support adversity, it makes us rejoice in tribulations; hence it is written that the just shall never be cast down, and the just man is he who lives by faith in the Lord: blessed is he who is called to this grace of faith. May your Holiness then respond to this happy call, so that your sorrow may be soon turned into joy. The Lord in His goodness passes over all our sins,' and then turning to speak of himself, he said, 'I announce things of which I have a certitude,

* See Guicciardini, *Storia d'Italia*, and the contemporary historians.

and for which I am willing to suffer every kind of persecution. But may your Holiness look favourably upon this work of faith, through which I labour continually, and not lend an ear to the impious. By this thou wilt receive from the Lord pure joy, instead of the spirit of grief, for the things predicted by me are true, and no one who resists the Lord can ever have peace. I write these things, most blessed Father, guided by a spirit of charity, and hoping that your Holiness may truly be comforted by God; for in a little while, his anger will be heard like unto thunder, and blessed are they who put their trust in Him. May the Lord of all mercy console your Holiness in your tribulation.'*

This letter was certainly a remarkable production; for we have here the excommunicated Prior of St. Mark's calling the Holy Father to repentance and a good life. The Pope did not give any sign of having been offended, but rather of being mercifully inclined; an evident sign that his grief and his repentance were at all events sincere. But these were short and fleeting moments. Borgia soon returned to his scandalous course of life more outrageously than ever, and then complained loudly that Savonarola should have dared to insult him in his paternal grief.† However these things may be, if the Signory and Savonarola were labouring in one direction, there were not wanting those who were doing all in their power in the opposite. The Arrabbiati had already sent a memorial to Rome, signed by a large number of the party, repeating the usual charges against the Friar. An intimation of this memorial was sent to Florence by the ambassador, and forthwith two others, in favour of Savonarola, were set on foot. One of them was signed by all the 250 friars in the convent, praising the life and doctrine of their Prior,

* This letter is published by Perrens in the Appendix to his first volume.

† The ambassador at Rome mentions this in his letters.

and imploring the Holy Father to remove the censure, and give his support to the holy enterprise, which had been found acceptable in the sight of God. This was followed by another, repeating the same things, which was signed by a large number of the principal citizens. It was begun in July, and, in a short time, 363 signatures were attached to it; and many more would have been added, had not the plague, which was becoming daily more threatening, interrupted almost everything in Florence.*

Already, from fifty to seventy persons died daily; which, although considered then to be a small number, was a sign which threatened a still greater calamity, especially taking into account the dense multitude which the city then contained.† All fled to their villas who could do so, and an universal terror began to spread. But while all those abandoned the city and their occupations, it will be readily imagined that Savonarola felt that serious duties were imposed upon him; that, by his holy office, he was bound to labour amidst the common calamity, and to succour and comfort the afflicted. Although he was prevented by his excommunication from going round to administer the sacred offices,‡ it is easy to imagine how much serious work he must have had to go through, when it is considered that the care of 250 friars was confided to him, the greater number of whom were novices, and all shut up in one convent, where, without effective precautions, the disease might make frightful havoc.

* Among the subscriptions to the second memorial was that of Niccolò d' Alessandro Machiavelli, which Perrens erroneously believed to be that of the Florentine secretary; he was the son of Bernardo.

† Letter of Savonarola to his brother Albert, dated July 24. See Appendix N.

‡ By not having attended to this, Perrens was led to commit so great an error as to say that Savonarola showed timidity, and was inactive during the plague.

In fact, it was not long before one of the friars was taken ill; and both the plague and terror had made their entrance into St. Mark's. The most timid were for making their escape; others advised Savonarola to think of his own safety; some of the citizens offered their villas to him; but he knew full well what his duty was in so serious a state of things. He took advantage of the offers he had received, to send the novices and the younger friars to the country, among whom was his own brother Marco Aurelio. The convent thus became almost depopulated; but he remained with his most faithful and experienced followers. He read to them, and commented upon, the Lamentations of Jeremiah,* the prophecies of Jonah, the history of Samson, and tried to keep up their courage. To those at a distance he wrote frequent and affectionate letters, which gave them courage to support the danger, and by which he reproved those who showed too great timidity. In a letter he wrote to Frà Paolo del Beccuto, who was thinking of removing from his own convent, he said: 'I do all in my power that our friars may escape from this peril; but I perceive that some of them show greater timidity than seculars—a cowardice unworthy of religious men, who ought rather to court than to fear death. We must trust in the Lord, and not in flight. I therefore cannot believe that you would think of absenting yourself from your convent at such a time. Some of the friars here die joyfully, as if they were going to a festival. Those who have care of the sick

* Probably those comments, of which there is an imperfect draft in the small volume entitled, *Alcuni, sermoni devoti di F. Jeronimo Savonarola, sopra il principio della Cantica e altri luoghi*; Venezia 1556. The commentaries on the Song of Solomon are also no more than a rough draft; there are, however, some fragments in Italian, less imperfect than those on Jeremiah, and not without value. The originals of these, together with many notes of sermons, lectures, &c., are in the Magliabechian library.

are well. Brother Antonio da San Quintino fell ill to-day, after having tended the sick with me.* In all his letters at this time we find much affection for his friars and the attendants; and great devotion and serenity of mind in the midst of so great dangers. On the 24th of July he wrote a letter to his brother Alberto at Ferrara, giving him an account of their brother M. Aurelio, saying: 'Frà Aurelio is not in Florence, on account of the plague, which as yet is not severe, but shows a serious beginning. We have daily from fifty to seventy deaths in the city; some make them amount to 100. One sees nothing but crucifixes and dead people. We ourselves, thanks be to God, are well; nor have I removed from Florence, although I have sent away more than seventy of the brethren; for I am not afraid, and am desirous to console those who are in trouble.'† On the 11th of August he again writes to the same brother: 'Be not afraid because of my remaining in the midst of the plague, for the Lord will help me. Although many places have been offered to me, I wish not to abandon the flock, but rather to remain to comfort the afflicted. It is wonderful to see the cheerfulness of those who die; friars and secular men and women draw their last breath praising the Lord.‡ In those solemn moments, Savonarola's thoughts were not limited to the friars; but by words, writings, and every other mode he could devise, he endeavoured equally to help seculars; for whose benefit he wrote his '*Letter to all the Elect*,' which he even called '*A Medical Treatise against the Plague*.'§ In that he laid down seven rules, to preserve the body as well as

* See the documents published by Padre Marchese.

† Ibidem.

‡ Ibidem. See Appendix O.

§ It is dated July 16, 1496. It was published then at Florence, and afterwards at Venice in 1638, in a small volume entitled, *Alcuni devotissimi trattati di F. J. Savonarola, &c.*

the spirit temperate and tranquil; recommended moderation in diet, cheerfulness of mind, and charity for the sick: 'Succour them, and be useful to them in everything and by every means, even if they are your enemies.'*

Fortunately the danger was less than was apprehended: by the beginning of August the plague was sensibly on the decline, and by the middle of the month had almost disappeared.† The citizens returned from the villas and resumed their ordinary occupations; the Convent of St. Mark's was again thrown open to the people, and on the 15th of the month the festival of the Madonna was celebrated in the second cloister by a public and solemn thanksgiving for the deliverance from the danger to which they had been exposed. The city resumed its former appearance, and, after the agitations and perils of that year, all were anxious for peace and tranquillity.

* During those latter months, Savonarola wrote many letters. To Maria Angiola Sforza, on a good course of life, May 24, 1497; to Francesco Pico on the same subject May 8, '97; in another to the same he says, that the excommunication has not interfered with his work, that on the contrary, the friars are cheerful and contented, July 2, '97. To two young women at Ferrara, advising them to prepare themselves well, in order the better to fulfil their intention of becoming nuns, May 24, '97. To Bertrando Ferrara, the apostolic prothonotary, congratulating him on his faith, which, tried by tribulations, is not derived from a natural light, July 12, '97. To the Duke of Ferrara, strengthening him in his faith, and exhorting him to believe that God proceeds in all his works by fixed laws, without deviating from them in one iota, August 1, '97. To Joanna Caraffa, the wife of Giovanni Francesco Pico, congratulating her upon her faith, and comforting her by telling her not to be afraid of tribulations, August 13. To the same on November 6, 97, not to be too scrupulous in matters of conscience—that charity covers every sin, and that whoever lives cheerfully in well-doing, is more acceptable to God than he who torments himself by being over scrupulous. In doubtful cases, to take the advice of the good, and follow their judgement. That a husband is most capable of giving advice, and that if she relies upon him, it will be more acceptable to the Lord, November 6, '97.

† It lasted altogether two months and-a-half.

CHAPTER III.

CAPTURE OF LAMBERTO DELL' ANTELLA, WHO DISCLOSES THE WHOLE CONSPIRACY OF THE MEDICI—THE TRIAL AND CONDEMNATION OF THE ACCUSED.

THE rest which the Florentine people hoped for on the disappearance of the plague had scarcely begun, when it was broken by an event which threw the whole city into the greatest commotion, greater than any which had been experienced since the year 1494. While Valori and Tosinghi were engaged in endeavouring to trace the conspiracy of Piero de' Medici, they laid hold of one Lamberto dell' Antella, an exile, who was secretly on his way to a villa belonging to him, and they found upon him a letter addressed to one of his relatives Francesco Gualterotti, then one of the Dieci. The letter contained a promise to reveal all the plots of Piero, and to make known matters of the highest importance to the Republic.*

He had had, in truth, the best opportunities of obtaining this knowledge, as he had been an old and faithful partisan of the Medici. In the revolution of 1494 he had been sent to the prison of the Stinche, along with his brother Alessandro. While there, they secretly had hopes and encouragement held out to them by Piero, then in Rome, and they contrived to make their escape. But in waiting upon him they met with an ex-

* Nardi, Machiavelli, and many historians, mention this capture of Antella.

traordinarily cold reception, and they very soon had experience of his brutality. 'He kept us,' thus Lamberto writes, 'in constant activity, to satisfy his mania about returning to Florence, but treated us worse than dogs.' In Piero's opinion, life was nothing worth unless he had some one to oppress or maltreat. Notwithstanding this usage, the two brothers submitted to all, were with him when he arrived before the walls of Florence, and returned with him to Siena. There they became objects of suspicion to him, and he forthwith had them imprisoned. Such was the cruelty of Piero, and such his treatment of old and tried servants, that when he left Siena, he several times sent back a messenger to Pandolfo Petrucci, the chief and almost entire master of that Republic, asking him to cast them into the Carnaio, a prison so horrid that no one ever came out of it alive. Petrucci, although a fast friend of Piero, did not choose to be an assassin, and he set the brothers at liberty, on the sole condition that they would not leave the Sienese territory, under a penalty of 2,000 florins. But they were far too eager for vengeance to lose any time; and, with the first favourable opportunity, they fled, taking the direction of Florence. Lamberto could hardly believe his good fortune when he was arrested and taken before the magistrates with the letter upon him.*

So soon as the Otto had examined the letter, they, according to the barbarous custom of the time, subjected poor Lamberto to torture, and after they had drawn him up with the rope, and let him down four times, they

* These particulars we have derived from the letter found upon Antella, and from the written confession he afterwards made. We do not know the exact day when he was taken, but in a letter of the Signory to the ambassador at Rome, dated August 10, they speak of the capture. *Archivio delle Riformagioni, Minute di lettere ad ambasciatori*: according to the old numbering, the manuscript was marked cl. x. Dist. i. No. 198.

interrogated him, sentence by sentence, to extract from him the whole truth. He was required to sign his answers, and these answers compromised citizens of so much power and so high in reputation,* that the Otto brought the matter before the Signory, declaring that they could not take upon themselves to sit in judgement on charges of so grave a nature; but the Signory replied, that they could alone judge in cases of crime against the state.† Notwithstanding this, they considered this case of so great importance that they selected five Arroto (citizens taken into consultation), and seven of the members of the Court of the Dieci, to assist in the investigation. After a minute examination of the facts, Lamberto dell' Antella, under the promise of a general pardon, made a full disclosure, which was reduced to writing, of all the plots, and of all the friends whom Piero de' Medici had in Florence.‡ He also gave intimation of a new attempt at a conspiracy, in which a promise was made to Piero that he should be secretly admitted into Florence on the night of the 15th of August. Many of the conspirators were in the country, some on account of the season of the year, some from the fear of contagion. Piero hoped to get up a tumult in his favour by distributing bread and money among the starving populace, by promising them the sacking of the houses of the rich, and in this way to get possession of the Palazzo and to seize the Government of the city.§ It was

* The letter to the ambassador above mentioned states, that the capture of Antella had disclosed the root of some malignant humour on the part of a person *who could not be prosecuted*; it then endeavours to make light of the matter, adding that they would prove to be vain attempts; 'for if there ever was a Republic unanimous in its determination to put an end to tyranny, this is one.'

† In our account of this trial we have been guided throughout by authentic documents; and among historians we have chiefly relied on Pitti (*Archivio Storico*, vol. i.), who narrates the facts with the utmost precision.

‡ This is the discovery to which we have frequently referred.

§ Nardi mentions this in his *Storia di Firenze*.

an audacious, and at the same time so foolish a project, that he alone could have had the hardihood of attempting it; but at the same time the conferences that had been held showed what he was contemplating, and sufficiently proved that the Republic was still in the greatest danger.

In the midst of all this agitation, the twenty citizens who were to try the case, having finished the examination of Antella, held a consultation; after which they took an oath that they would have no respect of persons, be they of whatever grade and condition they might. They gave orders that the Piazza should be guarded by soldiers that the *condottieri* (commanders of the mercenary troops) should have their men-at-arms ready, in case they should be wanted, and that no one should be allowed to quit the city. They further called out the guards of the Signory, and to avoid suspicion, summoned, in the name of the Signory, the persons implicated in the depositions of Antella to appear before them. Some immediately fled, others obeyed the call. At the conclusion of the trial it was proved that five of those then in custody had been guilty of high treason; and, according to law, must suffer death.

Bernardo del Nero, seventy-five years of age, from his authority and reputed wisdom, was held to be the chief of the criminals. The charge against him, however, amounted to this only, that being cognizant of the conspiracy, he did not denounce it; a crime, however, the more heinous as he was at the very time the Gonfaloniere of the Republic. The names of the other four were Giannozzo Pucci, an accomplished youth; and Lorenzo Tornabuoni, esteemed in Florence to be the very flower of elegance. These two had incurred the hatred of the people, from being well known to have been long partisans of Piero, to whom Tornabuoni was related;* and by

* The grandmother of Piero was a Tornabuoni.

appearing often at the sermons of the Friar, they had succeeded in making it believed that they were among the warmest of his followers. The remaining two were Giovanni Cambi,* a rich merchant, and Niccolò Ridolfi, the head of that family, and also a relation of Piero.†

The trial being concluded, the twelve citizens who had been called in as assessors retired, and the Otto then met by themselves to determine on the sentence. They were, however, unwilling to incur the hatred of so many powerful families, and they had again recourse to the Signory, who again refused to take upon themselves a duty not imposed on them by the statutes. At last, Domenico Bartoli perceiving this culpable weakness of the Otto, who were shrinking from the performance of their duty through fear of powerful families, proposed that the case should be brought before the Consiglio Maggiore, to which they were bound by the new law to carry it, as the last appeal. This, however, was stoutly‡ resisted by the defenders of the accused, who said, ‘that it would not be proper to spread state secrets so soon among so great a multitude, nor to submit the question to such a diversity of opinions, when the judgement of the magistrates ought to be held sufficient.’‡ There was thus on the one side the magistrates, who were afraid to do their duty; on the other the accused, equally afraid of the laws and of the hatred of the people, and desirous to gain time, hoping that, on the election of a new Signory, matters might take a turn in their favour. They had already three of the existing Signory on their side, and having succeeded in gaining over another,

* Not Cambi the historian, who was of a plebeian family, nor the rich Cambi of the Cocomero Street. This one lived in the Quarter San Trinità.

† He was father-in-law of a sister of Piero. For all these particulars, see Nardi, *Storia di Firenze*, p. 130, vol. i.; Cerretani, idem, M.S. Magliab.; Parenti, idem; Guicciardini, idem, cap. xv.; Pitti, idem.

‡ Pitti, *Storia di Firenze*.

Michele Berti, a relation of Bernardo del Nero, they were able by these four votes to prevent any decision against them from being come to.* They so far succeeded, that the final judgement was postponed to another meeting, to be held on the 17th of August. Nor was this a slight gain, for the new election was coming nearer by each day's delay, and they were in daily expectation of urgent letters in their favour from the allies; Piero de' Medici was constantly increasing his force in Romagna, and, finally, it was sufficiently evident that as the accused had been condemned according to law, their only hope was in gaining time. This was so well known to the adverse party that they were equally eager for an immediate conclusion; and from all these circumstances it was evident that the adjourned meeting would be a very stormy one.

The Signory had summoned the attendance of about 200 of the principal citizens; and although all did not come, there were present the sixteen Gonfalonieri of the companies, the twelve Buoni Uomini, the Dieci della Guerra, the Otto di Guardia e Balìa, the officers of the Monte, the Conservatori di Legge, the chiefs of the Guelf party, many Arroti, and, lastly, the Senate or Consiglio degli Ottanta; all of whom, in addition to the Signory itself, formed a meeting of 136 persons. The defenders of the accused hoped to be able to say and effect much on that day; but should they fail, they thought they might at least succeed, with so numerous a tribunal, in obtaining another postponement of the decision. So soon as the depositions were read, the Signory ordered that all

* For a decision in the Signory, which consisted of nine members, six votes in its favour were necessary; the same number was required in the decisions of the Otto, because two-thirds constituted the legal majority. When the decision was come to by a numerical majority, it was said to be a vote of *sei fave* (the six balloting beans).

should pass to their respective benches, there to consult what the decision should be; and that each bench should report its opinion freely, without any hindrance from the ancient usage, which forbade any expression of opinion contrary to that of the Signory. The immediate result of the votes was, that the persons who had been found guilty should be beheaded, and their property confiscated.* The delivery of this verdict struck the defenders with surprise and dismay; they knew not what to say or do. Remembering, however, that they had four friendly votes in the Signory, they held that the declaration of a small number could not stand for the opinions of all, and that it was necessary to have recourse to individual voting. They hoped that by this proceeding, which had no precedent, they might create some confusion; for many who were not accustomed to speaking in the presence of the Signory might be embarrassed, and give rise to doubts as to the nature of their votes; and thus time would be gained. This design was, however, completely baffled by Francesco Valori, who, starting up near the bench of the Signory, called out for the notary, and, with a loud voice, demanded that it should be recorded that he adjudged those citizens to be deserving of death and confiscation. His example was followed by others, and nearly all expressed their agreement with the declaration of Valori.† The effect of this was, that the Signory found themselves constrained to order the Otto to carry the sentence into execution; for, when put to the vote, it was so decided by a majority of six to two.‡

The defenders now thought that all was lost; they

* Pitti, *Storia di Firenze*.

† Pitti supposes that the notary must have neglected to take a note of the few dissentient votes, as it was not to be supposed that there were not some.

‡ Pitti, *Storia di Firenze*.

knew not what to do, except to have recourse to the celebrated Guidantonio Vespucci, a learned lawyer, who had great influence with the Arrabbiati. He at once advised that there should be an appeal to the Consiglio Maggiore from the sentence of the Otto, in conformity with the new law of the *sei fave*. This proposal of an appeal was immediately brought before the Signory; and on its appearing that four of the Signory were in favour of it, such disagreement and confusion arose, that it became necessary to adjourn the discussion to the 21st of the month. Thus, most unexpectedly, the defenders again succeeded in their object of gaining time.

The disagreement in the Palazzo soon became known to the people in the Piazza, where there was a general cry that the law must be put in force; that the country was in danger; that putting off the decision from one meeting to another must be fatal to the Republic. At the same time, anonymous papers were circulating throughout the city charging the magistrates with weakness. Such was the state of things when the adjourned meeting of the Signory to the 21st took place; when the question yea or nay, for the appeal, was to be decided. It is not to be wondered at that a very hot dispute immediately arose. By the one party it was declared, with those exaggerated and *ad captandum vulgus* expressions, which the Arrabbiati were in the habit of making use of when it suited their purpose—‘that the laws gave the right of an appeal against the sentence of the Otto; that the people were the absolute lords of the Republic; that therefore everything ought to be referred to the people, to whom it belonged to decide upon the life of a citizen.’ But such words in the mouths of those who had conspired to restore the Medici excited indignation, and they were thus replied to by the other party: ‘That the judgement of the people was known to all; that the appeal had been

offered to the defenders at the very beginning, who had rejected it; that the law of appeal had been passed solely to prevent a citizen from losing life and property by the mere decision of the *sei fave*; that now, not only the Otto, but the Signory, had given judgement, as well as all the magistrates and all the principal citizens; that, from so extraordinary a tribunal, no law gave the right of appeal; and whoever asked for it, could only have in view to gain time, while the Republic was in a state of disorder, while the country was in danger, and while, in the Signory itself, there had been a conspiracy against their liberties. Do you not know,' they concluded, 'that the tyrant is increasing the number of his troops; do you not see that you are opening your gates to Piero de' Medici?''* Upon this the Collegi† were excited to a state of fury, and, rising up, they threatened to bring out their banners, and lead the people to destroy the houses of all those who opposed the carrying into effect a sentence so just and so necessary. A great tumult then arose in the hall, with a fearful confusion of cries, among which, however, could be distinguished the words of Francesco degli Albizzi, who, with a tremendous voice, never ceased calling out 'Justice! justice!' The defenders of the accused did what they could to add to the tumult, hoping that that day might yet be got through without any decision; for, although it was already near the evening, they were still disputing, and had come to no resolution. The popular party meanwhile were roused to such a pitch of rage, that they themselves prevented every attempt at an orderly proceeding, and were thus promoting the object of their adversaries.

* See Pitti, who faithfully reports the speeches that were made at the meeting. See also Cerretani and Parenti.

† That is, the Gonfalonieri of the companies, and the Buoni Uomini, but chiefly the first.

Just at this moment, letters were received from the ambassadors at Rome, which on being read to the meeting by the Signory, caused a new access of fury in all. From these letters it was evident that the danger of the Republic was indeed very great; that the enemy were plotting on all sides; that the duke of Milan was encouraging them; and that the Pope was placing all his forces at their disposal, while he was pretending moderation and friendship towards the Republic, the more easily to accomplish its ruin. A demand was then made that the depositions at the trial should be again read, in order to compare them with the contents of the letters just received; after this was done the citizens again took their places on their respective benches to deliberate, and then each bench sent one of their number to declare their opinion. This was proved by a large majority to be that the capital punishment must be carried into execution without delay; but the knowledge that the Signory continued disposed to favour the accused induced some to hesitate to express themselves openly. Francesco Altoviti, who had spoken for the Gonfalonieri of the companies, and who, a short time before, had threatened to sack the houses of those who opposed the execution of the sentence, now said 'that there were still some on his bench who were in favour of the appeal.' Francesco Gualterotti, in the name of the Dieci di Libertà, spoke out more frankly, saying: 'The greater commotion you make in the city, the more you forward the designs of your enemies. We have seen that all the potentates of Italy have entered into a conspiracy against us, and that it is at Rome that all their plots are hatched. This appeal is not now required to enable you to know the opinion of the people, as I have often before made it clear to you, its sole object is to gain time, that aid from without may be obtained. But if, after all, your excellencies are determined to grant this appeal, lose no time

in calling the Consiglio Maggiore, for delay will only cause mischief both within and without the city. It will moreover be necessary to have an armed force in readiness to defend the Republic, surrounded as it is by so many enemies.' The bench of the lawyers was the next to come forward, who, in this matter, were looked upon as persons of great authority. They said, without reserve, 'that necessity justified a refusal of the appeal;* but, at all events, if it was to be granted, let it be on the following day, for any delay will be ruinous.' The Otto, who were the ordinary judges in all State causes, gave it as their opinion 'that the appeal must absolutely be refused, for if the defendants should obtain from the Consiglio Maggiore an opinion in opposition to the sentence which had been given, it would bring ruin upon the city.' This was followed by the declarations of the twelve benches of plain citizens, who were unanimous in advising that the sentence should be carried out, and that quickly. Then came the final conclusion, in words consecrated by usage: 'Nevertheless, whatever determination your excellencies shall come to will be approved.†' To such an extent could an old custom prevail, not only against the newly-acquired liberty, but even against that passion by which everyone was then actuated.

The Signory, encouraged by this moderation of language, and considering that it was already ten o'clock at night, and that many were worn out, began again to postpone the decision, hoping that they might dissolve the meeting without coming to any conclusion. To this calm succeeded, on a sudden, a most violent and unexpected tempest: for Valori, perceiving their inten-

* 'When there is any fear of a tumult, there can be no appeals.' So says Guicciardini, *Storia di Firenze*, p. 160.

† The whole discussion is faithfully reported in the *Frammenti di Pratica* above quoted.

tions, rose up, and with eyes flashing fire, and furious as a lion, he ran forward to the bench of the Signory, and there, taking up the ballot box, and striking it upon the seat, called out with a menacing tone: 'If justice be not executed, serious disorders must ensue:' upon which Luca Martini, who presided, had not courage to offer any resistance, and immediately put the question to the vote. Five of the Signory then voted for death, but the other four continued to support the accused, and voted for the appeal. Francesco Valori then, regardless of all custom and of all respect for the Signory, with a voice hoarse from rage, called out: 'For what purpose, then, have your excellencies called so many citizens together, who, one by one, as recorded by your notary, have given their votes against these innovators, these subverters of their country and destroyers of its liberties? Have they not all this day confirmed that vote? Have you not heard one universal cry of jealousy for the safety of the Republic? Let your excellencies bear in mind that the people of Florence have placed you in the position you occupy to defend their liberties, which if you neglect, through favour to such perfidious citizens, be assured—be assured, I tell you—that there will not be wanting those who will defend so just, so holy a cause, to the peril of those who shall prove themselves to be hostile to it.' He then, stretching out his arm, seized the ballot box, and again held it out to Martini, who, either persuaded or terrified, at length put the sentence to the vote in the following terms: 'Having heard the report and advice of the magistrates, of the senate, of the Ottanta, and of the other citizens, for the enforcement of the sentence, and seeing that any delay would certainly be productive of tumult and danger, be it ordered, that the Signori Otto shall, without delay, this same night, put to death these five citizens, who in this same meeting have been condemned to die.' The sudden motion of

Martini, and still more the ferocious and menacing look of Valori, when he presented the ballot box to each, so terrified the four dissentient Signori, that they withdrew their opposition. After which, the order was drawn out and handed to the Otto, who went immediately to the palazzo of the Capitano to prepare for the execution.*

Meanwhile the defenders of the condemned led them through the meeting barefooted and in irons: they tried, but in vain, by words and actions, to move the pity of those around them, who could scarcely conceal their indignation. When they arrived at the palazzo of the Capitano,† the criminals were allowed to be a short time with their confessors, to reflect upon the state of their souls. Valori, who, from the part he had acted in the business, had become almost lord of the city, placed 300 soldiers to guard the palazzo against any interference of the friends or relations of the condemned. All was now in order in the court-yard of the Capitano, into which were constantly pouring so great and so miscellaneous a crowd, that, to use the expression of a contemporary, 'it looked like a cave of hell.' There were men with countenances expressive of fierce indignation, with arms in their hands and vengeance in their hearts; and there might also be seen noble citizens, who seemed to shrink from being seen through fear for their own lives, or from showing their grief and dismay for those relations and friends who were so soon to die. Much cruel suffering and bitter anguish were endured that night. A violent confusion of arms, noise and blasphemy, went on increasing until two o'clock

* In this narrative, and including what was said by those who spoke, we have faithfully followed Pitti, *Storia di Firenze*, Archivio Storico, 1.

† Pitti, Cerretani, Nardi. According to Pitti, they went to the palazzo of the Bargello (the sheriff), but Cerretani, perhaps more accurately states that they went to that of the Capitano, which was next the Custom House, and adjoining the Palazzo Vecchio.

in the morning, when it was succeeded by a funeral silence. The criminals were brought out one by one, accompanied by his confessor and by a criminal judge, to the place of execution, where each in succession courageously laid his head upon the block, submitting to his fate with great fortitude. Their bodies were given up to their relations.

The same evening the Signory sent a despatch to Rome, with an account of what had occurred, in the following terms: 'The city and the entire State were of one mind against these perfidious and parricidal citizens; even their relations desiring that justice should be enforced. And now it is to be hoped that for a while we may be preserved in a sound state, for all are animated by a desire to destroy any similar shoot. May the Lord have mercy upon their souls, of which they, who would have betrayed their native land, have much need.'*

Thus ended the lives of five citizens, who, from their condition, their authority, and their public and private acts, were held among the most eminent in the Republic. A few others were lightly punished, for having known of the conspiracy; but Frà Mariano de Genazzano, although known to be one of the most guilty, by having made his escape to Rome, could be visited with no greater penalty than a sentence of banishment. Lamberto dell' Antella and his brother not only had their lives spared, but were allowed to wear arms; their unpaid fines were remitted, and other favours were conferred upon them; but their condemnation as rebels was not cancelled.† The facts Lamberto had brought to light, and the whole of the

* Minutes of letters to the ambassadors, 1496-7. *Archivio delle Riformazioni*.

† We state this on the ground that we find at a later period a decree having passed cancelling all sentences of banishment.

proceedings against the condemned, were kept most secret; for, as the authors of the conspiracy had been punished, it was desirable that all remembrance of it should, as much as possible, be forgotten.

It is important that we should state that, during the whole of these tumultuous proceedings, Savonarola kept himself shut up in his convent, took no part in them, and was wholly occupied with correcting the proofs of his treatise on the Triumph of the Cross. Neither in the historians of the time, in any of his letters, nor in any of the biographies, do we find a single word to lead us to believe that he had shown either favour or disfavour to any of the accused. In two instances only, during his own trial, does he allude to them; in the first, when speaking of Bernardo del Nero, he said, 'His being put to death gave me no satisfaction; but I should have been pleased if he had been exiled.'* In the second instance, he said: 'As regarded those five citizens, he had in no way intermeddled in the affairs of anyone of them, except so far that he had recommended Lorenzo Tornabuoni to Valori.'† This evidently proves that if we find him meddling at all, it was only to soften the violence of the feeling that existed against the accused. Notwithstanding this, no sooner had the calumnies against the memory of Savonarola began, than he was said to have been the principal cause why the appeal of the accused had been refused, after he himself had been the promoter of the law which conferred that right. Nor did anyone choose to remember that it was Vespucci who defended that law, and not Savonarola, who rather opposed it, or at least induced his followers to resist its

* See the printed trial. It is necessary to remind the reader that all the alterations made in the examinations of Savonarola were to his disadvantage; so that we may fully rely on every passage that is favourable to him.

† The examination conducted by the Pope's commissioners.

passing.* An examination of the facts makes it abundantly evident that at that time he could in no way have exercised any influence either with the people or the judges; for after the excommunication, and while negotiations were going on to have it recalled, it would not only have been a great mistake, but intense folly in him to have mounted the pulpit. As to Valori, who certainly acted the chief part in bringing about the decision, it must be admitted that he showed himself to have been instigated by hatred or jealousy of Bernardo del Nero, his political enemy.† Though of a generous and loyal disposition, he was a man who on all occasions was more guided by impetuosity than by reason, and in those heated discussions he could not restrain himself, far less could he have been restrained by any authority of the Friar, who was then shut up in his cell at a distance. Besides, it is to be considered, that if the letter of the ambassadors had not been received during the meeting and at the very moment when everyone was so inflamed with indignation against the magistrates for their feebleness and too evident partiality, the accused would most probably have again succeeded in getting the decision postponed.

It was thus a concurrence of events that neither were nor could have been foreseen, which all at once brought

* See Book ii. cap. 5, of this work. Machiavelli and Guicciardini were the first who brought this charge against him, and their authority has been followed by all their successors. Guicciardini, in his *Storia di Firenze*, tries to correct in some degree the mistake he had committed in his *Storia d'Italia*; but it is more in moderating the expressions than in correcting the facts. Although these two historians had known Savonarola in their youth, they wrote at a later period, and at a time when he was the subject of many unjust accusations, so that they did not always escape from the prevalent erroneous opinions, in calumniating the Republic and Friar. And the authority of Guicciardini and Machiavelli must give way before the force of truth, when that is made clear by documents of indisputable authority.

† Guicciardini mentions this authority in his *Storia di Firenze*.

the meeting to agree to the execution of the sentence of death on those five citizens, who certainly by law, by the universal opinion of the people, and by the notions of justice at the time, deserved the punishment they underwent. The trial, it is true, was not conducted in accordance with judicial rules, but if, in the first instance, the irregularity arose from a too great indulgence on the part of the magistrates, who, having convicted the accused of high treason, had not the courage immediately to pronounce sentence of death, in order to give them the chance of an appeal, the greatest and most culpable disorder was caused by the defenders of the culprits. Having refused to submit their case to the Consiglio Maggiore, when the power to do so was first offered, they had no longer any right to demand an appeal, when they had asked for and obtained an extraordinary tribunal, consisting of an assembly of all the principal magistrates and citizens of Florence. They could adduce no reason for their conduct, except the too evident one of proceeding from one illegality to another, in order to gain time, in expectation that the new Signory would be in their favour. And how could the magistrates twice become tools to forward such invidious proceedings, and how could the deliberative assembly assent to so outrageous an attempt? The opinion of the whole people was clearly confirmed a few days after, when the son of Ridolfi came before the Consiglio Maggiore to ask remission of the confiscation of his father's property, which, on being three times put to the vote, was each time rejected.* Neither the laws nor the Consiglio Maggiore could ever have absolved those five citizens from guilt. And as to Savonarola, he neither wished, nor, if he had wished, had he

* Pitti, *Storia di Firenze*; Cerretani, *idem*.

any power, to show himself disposed either for or against the sentence, which was passed in the heat, or, it may be more justly said, in the fury, of a stormy discussion.

CHAPTER IV.

PUBLISHED AND UNPUBLISHED PAMPHLETS OF SAVONAROLA.
THE TRIUMPH OF THE CROSS.

AFTER the death of Bernardo del Nero and his companions, the Piagnoni became very powerful and in the succeeding six months three several Signori were of the popular party, whose only difficulty, during their terms of office, was how to provide for the exhausted state of the exchequer. But the dispute between Savonarola and the Pope became daily more angry, and was a continued source of grief both to the Government and people. Both were distressed in seeing a man who had done so much for his country and for religion thus unjustly hated, and by taking part of the Friar they placed themselves and the public in a continual and increasing state of disharmony with Rome. The most earnest letters were constantly sent to the ambassador, Alessandro Bracci, desiring he would endeavour to obtain the absolution of Savonarola. 'It is our desire,' thus wrote the Signori, 'that you knock incessantly at the door, and never cease to call out and use all possible means; that you never give up nor spare any amount of trouble, until you gain your object.'*

The Pope made no reply, but on the contrary was watching for a more favourable opportunity to carry

* Letter of the Signori of November 7, 1497. See Padre Martini document xvii.

his designs. Savonarola lived retired in his convent, where, taking advantage of the opportunity, and with an industry scarcely to be credited, he occupied himself in writing new tracts, and in publishing some he had already written. We shall notice them briefly, in order to leave ourselves more space to dwell upon his great work, 'The Triumph of the Cross,' which at this time made its appearance.

We will first of all notice a tract of a few pages, which he called the 'Lament of the Spouse of Christ.' In it he bewails the slaughter of the whole Christian flock by the priests of his time.* It would appear that

* Hieronymi Savonarolæ, *Lamentatio Sponsæ Christi adversus tepidos et exhortatio ad fideles Christi ut præcentur pro renovatione Ecclesiæ*. Florentinæ, apud Laurentium de Morgianis, 1497. This work was prohibited at Rome. We must here notice another small work, which both Meyer and Audin de Rians have attributed to Savonarola, while we are of opinion that he was not the author of it. It is entitled *Loqui prohibeor et tacere non possum*. Meyer saw the manuscript in the Bouturlin library,¹ and Audin met with a printed copy of it among the *quattrocentisti* in the Riccardian library, which last we have examined. It consists of only six leaves, without any date or name of the author. The ideas are not very different from those of Savonarola, but the careless latin throws a doubt, at the outset, of his having been the author. It thus begins:—'The shepherds allow the sheep to stray at their will, and they scare away those who keep to the right path; they threaten with the most severe punishment all who seek the fountain of pure water; therefore it is forbidden to me to speak (*loqui prohibeor*). But I see those wasteful shepherds driving the flocks from the rich pastures, and the lean and exhausted sheep are left to be the food of wild beasts; therefore I cannot remain silent (*tacere non possum*). The judges and the elders, to whom it would belong to judge, sit on the seat of perdition, and overthrow all order. Arbitrary will takes the place of law, and wickedness suppresses the feeble voice of the just; therefore it is forbidden to me to speak.' He goes on thus in the first part of the tract, and finishes with: *Ideo loqui cogor et exclamare compellor* (therefore I am forced to speak out, and am compelled to exclaim); and then, full of hope, he says:—'Behold now every servant praises his master. My mouth is filled, O Lord, with my love for Thee, and I will sing Thy glory; already the night closes, and the dawn of a better day arises; our redemption is at hand.'

Such ideas might doubtless be attributed to Savonarola, were it not

¹ A private library of a Russian nobleman at St. Petersburg, since dispersed.—TR.

the tract on the seven steps in the spiritual life of 'San Bonaventura,' (*Trattato sopra i sette gradi della vita spirituale di San Bonaventura*)* was published at this time, which, as is stated in the title, is nothing more than an epitome of the work of that ancient doctor of the Church. He printed many letters addressed to the friars of St. Mark's. In one on the exercise of charity, he shows how this virtue is possible, in all places and under all circumstances; for the true Christian ought to be able to say with the philosopher, *omnia mea mecum porto* (all I possess I have about me). In another letter, written this year, on the vigil of the Assumption, he congratulates them on their steadfastness; and in a third, he discourses on the proper method to be observed in prayer: *Del discreto modo di*

that in two or three places, there are distinct allusions to him as already dead. Here is an example:—

'Fratres et discipuli carissimi qui, ab ipso fonte uberrimo, prædulcissima eloquia, magno oblectamento, frequentius hauserunt; qui tanquam exanimis et velut stupidi altiora doctrinæ mirabantur; qui virum omni quavis scientia præclarissimum magnæque sanctitate venerandum firmissime asserebant, instanter prædicabant, omnique demonstrationum genere id animis hominum inserere nitebantur. Nunc, ac si lethæi fluminis unda demersi, in silentio trahunt dies suos, et ad unuscuiusque rei pavent occursum. Nonnulli ex eis, timore perterriti, digito labris imposito, silentium indicant, si quos noverint hilari vultu loquentes magnalia Dei. Nec desunt qui, asperiori obedientiæ malleo simplicium dorsum incurvent; quia et obliquis oculis intuentur quos pristinæ fidei quippiam servasse crediderint.'

We also find in the copy in the Riccardian library, written on the margin in an old hand:—'*La fede nel Frate*' (the faith of the Friar), and in another place where the author names 'martyres Dei inclytos,' in the same hand-writing, '*il Frate e i tre compagni*,' a clear proof that the work was known not to be Savonarola's. The copy here referred to is bound up with many tracts of Savonarola and his disciples, and at the beginning of it there is a letter of Gio Franc. Pico della Mirandola, *A li electi di Dio abitanti nella città di Firenze*, dated 'il giorno della Resurrezione, 1498.' In this letter Pico gives encouragement to faith in the doctrine of Savonarola, whose prophecies will certainly come true. It is not improbable that the work which follows may have been the production of Pico. (See Riccardini, 123, *quattrocentisti*.)

* In the bibliography prefixed to Burlamacchi, an edition of 1497 is quoted. The greater number of these minor works of Savonarola were reprinted in various collections made at Venice, two of which appeared in 1537 and 1538, under the title of *Alcuni devotissimi Trattati, &c.*

fare orazione.* As letters addressed to him from all quarters were daily increasing in number, he hoped to put a stop to them by an epistle, a very beautiful one, which he addressed to the Sisters of the third Order of Dominicans, commonly called the Sisters of Annalena. In it he said, 'There is no use in writing if those who read will not profit by it. I have already written enough to include the whole of a Christian's life, therefore I cannot take up my pen to multiply tracts to no purpose. To repeat the same things over and over again may be very useful in sermons, for words are fugitive, and leave a slight impression; but what is written can be read and re-read. The Holy Gospel was not delivered in writing, nor on letters of stone, but engraven on the hearts of the Apostles, and in this way worked so great miracles. You, who are continually asking for new exhortations and new letters are like those who, reading much and doing little, never learn anything. It was more profitable to St. Antonio to have heard, "Go and sell all thou hast and give it to the poor, and follow me," than it profited many great theologians to have studied and re-studied all their theology. Therefore, my beloved, there being so many works in the ordinary course of life which suffice for the salvation of everyone, there is no necessity to have treatises and letters multiplied, but rather that you should read what has already been written, and follow that up by works.†

* Printed at Florence in 1497, and at Venice (*Alcuni devotissimi Trattati, &c.*)

† Dated at St. Mark's, in Florence, October 17, 1497, and printed there the same year.

We shall here notice other minor works of Savonarola, which were either written this year, or which we have omitted to notice in preceding chapters. First of all we would call attention to his *Exposition of the Ten Commandments*, addressed to the Abbess of Murate, and printed at Florence as early as 1495. It is a minute and earnest guide to examination of conscience. In the same year was printed, and afterwards often reprinted, his *Letter to the Countess of Mirandola*, who had,

Among the numerous minor writings of Savonarola we must not forget his 'Exposition of Habakkuk,' a small work in Latin which has hitherto been left not only unpublished but even unexamined, on account of the difficulty of decyphering the handwriting. We have not been able to determine at what time it was written, but it appears to have been before the excommunication was issued. The text of the prophet gives him an op-

the intention of becoming a nun. In that he speaks of the object in view, on assuming the dress, and how it is to be gained: by that perfect union with Christ which the faithful must aim at, making him live in their very soul.

The '*Ten Rules for Prayer in Times of Great Tribulation*,' was a tract printed in 1497, at the same time with the letter to the Sisters of Annalena. Meyer quotes an edition of the first of them in 1495. They are—1st, to pray to God to send good pastors; 2nd, that he would distinguish the true from the false prophets; 3rd, that he would make known that external ceremonies are of no value, unless accompanied by an inward spirit; 4th, that he would make us love things that are simple, and disregard earthly things; 5th, that he would strengthen that illumination by gifts of the Holy Spirit. These are rules by which his burdens are to be warded off. The other five which follow are to enable us to bear tribulations when they come: 1st, by frequently partaking of the Sacrament; 2nd, by constancy in prayer; 3rd, by praying the Lord to protect us against the power of evil; 4th, that he may quickly dispel its effects; 5th, that he may make the good perfect, and turn sinners to repentance.

Tract on the Mystery of the Cross. There is a figure of a Cross, some mottoes, and a short explanation.

Tract on the Sacrament and Mystery of the Mass, consisting of two pages, repeating things already said.

Rules for all Religious Persons, composed by Frà Jeronimo, and given to his friars. 1st, Poverty; 2nd, Charity; 3rd, Obedience; 4th, Avoiding detractions; 5th, Flying from evil conversations; 6th, Constancy in prayer. At the end of this work there is a figure representing the ladder of life, on the steps of which the above virtues are inscribed.

Exposition of the Ave Maria; written at the request of a certain devout woman. It is merely a literal explanation.

Letter to a devout Bolognese lady, giving some rules for the Communion.

Frater Hieronymus dilectis fratribus suis. He inquires how it is that his friars are so troubled with headache: he attributes them to too long meditations, and recommends moderation.

A chapter held in St. Mark's on Holy Cross Day (September 26), recommending fasting and abstinence.

A brief letter to an intimate friend consisting of two pages only, in which he laments that Italy will not listen to him, the cause of so great woes.

portunity to speak of the Divine justice, and to bring forward the arguments that we have frequently seen him expound in the course of his sermons. 'The story in the Old Testament,' he says, 'ought to convince us of the necessity of a coming scourge; therefore we ought to be prepared to bear it, by the help of prayer and the Holy Scriptures. The prophet Habakkuk complains to the Lord of the persecutions endured, and we have undertaken to expound him, that his audacity may be a lesson to teach us humility. The Lord is all perfection; no one can inquire into his judgements unless with great humility, for even the prophet Habakkuk was confounded by his boldness. He laments to see the triumph of the wicked and the oppression of the good, and does not perceive that the object of that is to punish the sins of men, and call the good to repentance. So it has happened, and so it now happens, under your very eyes; witness the persecutions that we ourselves have to suffer. But when we humble ourselves before the Lord, then we are able to comprehend the signification of that triumph of the wicked and the nature of their felicity.' He then breaks forth with terrible denunciations against riches and worldly wealth, and against such of the clergy as seek after them; finally maintaining that the good in the midst of their tribulations are far more happy than the wicked in their triumphs, and that the former ought to be thankful to the Lord, who has called them to him with a scourge. Although there is little originality in this small work, it was deserving of notice, not only because it has hitherto been unpublished, but because it is an example of those short treatises contained in the notes written on the margins, and at the beginning and end of his Bible, and which no one before had examined.* We

* Another manuscript of this work is in the library of St. Mark, at Venice, cod. xli. class ix. of the Latin MSS. It appears also to be an

may also add that there exists in the Magliabechian library many rough drafts or memoranda, on very compendious notes of sermons, a part of which unpublished writings we intend to bring out.

It is now time that we should speak of the 'Triumph of the Cross.' In that work Savonarola gives a full exposition of the Catholic doctrine, with a power of analysis and a method both philosophical and new, laying aside the scholastic, which until then had been deemed essential in every theological work. Savonarola, in the fifteenth century, was in truth the glorious founder of that noble school which, in a later age, could boast of the names of Bossuet and Leibnitz,* and which afterwards fell into decay, to the great injury of the Catholic faith and of religious studies. The scholastic method has been again triumphant in theology, and the more simple and scientific method introduced by our author four centuries ago, would even now be an advancement, but which we in vain hope to see realised.

In this work Savonarola proposes to examine and expound the truth of faith by natural reason, 'not that faith, which is a gratuitous gift of God, can be derived from reason, but because it is with reason that we can give battle to infidels, open to them the way of salvation, awaken the lukewarm, and strengthen be-

autograph; but it had not been examined by anyone on account of the great difficulty of the hand-writing. It is our intention to print it, along with other writings of Savonarola that have not been published, after we shall have carefully collated it with the other copy, that at the end of the Bible in the Magliabechian library, which is undoubtedly autograph.

We would here call attention to a passage in the Marcian manuscript, p. 50.

'Non cogitant nisi præsentia; de futuris malis aut non habent fidem *'firmam aut, tanquam præsumptuosi, putant misericordiam Dei tam magnam, ut SINE OPERIBUS salvet homines.'* The idea is throughout opposed to that which constitutes the fundamental doctrine of Luther.

* We allude to the form and not to the opinions of those authors; the one a Catholic, the other a Protestant.

lievers.' He thus goes on: 'We do not rely on any 'authority, and shall proceed as if there were not a 'man in the world deserving of belief, however wise 'he might be; but appeal solely to natural reason.'* Such a language in the fifteenth century, an age of authority and intellectual servitude, is a sign, as we have already remarked, of the utmost boldness and originality. It is still more remarkable when we consider that Savonarola ever remained faithful to that banner, and that he carried out the whole work on those principles. 'Reason,' he says, 'proceeds from things visible to things invisible; for all our knowledge is derived from the senses, which know that only which is extrinsic; the intellect penetrates the substance of things, and from what it reveals we rise to a knowledge of things invisible and of God. Now as philosophers endeavour to find God in the marvellous and invisible operations of nature, so we, in the visible Church, seek to find the invisible and supreme head of it, Jesus Christ.'†

'Philosophers collect together, as in a picture, all the operations and all the existences in creation, to have their assemblage before them, the better to recognise in them their Divine author. So we desire to bring together all the visible works of Christ and of His Church in one single image, in order that their Divine nature may the more easily be seen to shine forth.'

* Introduction. Many editions of the *Triumph of the Cross* appeared in the fifteenth century, and in after times. Savonarola published it in Latin, but soon had a translation made, or rather an Italian paraphrase, for the general use of the faithful. We have followed the Italian edition, because the style of it is much more simple and plain; the scholastic formulæ, which still partially exist in the Latin edition, are here laid aside, the better to adapt the work to the general reader. *De veritate fidei in dominicæ Crucis triumphum*, S. L. et A.; *Libro di F. Hieronymo dell'ordine dei predicatori, della verità della fede sopra il glorioso trionfo della Croce di Cristo*, with a preface by Domenico Benivieni. S. L. et A.

† Book i. chapter i.

This image is that so often brought forward in his sermons. He represents a mystical chariot traversing the world in triumph. Christ is seated upon it, victorious, crowned with thorns, pierced with his wounds, illuminated by celestial light descending from on high. In his right hand he holds the Old and New Testament; in his left the cross and the other signs of his passion; at his feet are the cup, the host, and all the symbols of the sacrament; near him sits the Virgin Mary; and by her side are urns containing the ashes of martyrs. The chariot is drawn by the Apostles, preachers, and prophets; the multitude of the faithful and the martyrs follow after; behind them are infidels, sceptics, and enemies of the Church; with their idols laid prostrate, their books burned, their altars thrown down. Thus accompanied, the chariot traverses the world, from one triumph to another, throwing down and overcoming every obstacle.* This chariot, he says, will be a new world, from which a new philosophy will be derived. But as in all the sciences we must admit some first principles, from which they set out, so is it necessary that we admit, as indisputable, certain facts from which we must proceed: that is to say, that Christ was crucified, worshipped, and has converted the world; that the Virgin, the Holy Trinity, are worshipped by Christians, and so forth. That these are facts which no man of sound intellect can deny, and if some Pagan writers pass them over in silence, thousands confirm them by their conversions.†

Here the author enters upon the substance of his work, and discusses the existence of God with arguments which are entirely rationalistic. He considers God as the prime mover, the first cause, and, after reviewing all the known arguments of the school, dwells more particularly on the following:—‘There is no

* Book i. chapter ii.

† Book i. chapters iii. and iv.

sentiment in our nature without a purpose; now as the whole human race has by nature a faith and belief in the existence of a God, we must necessarily infer from that faith that He truly exists: otherwise we should have to admit that a sentiment implanted in our nature was purposeless, which is contrary to universal experience. In inanimate things, in animate, and, above all, in man, we see that nothing in nature is without a purpose; that all is ordained for some special end.' He then passes to the Divine attributes, and says, 'God is incorporeal, has no form of a body, is not a compounded substance, but is one, immutable, and eternal; infinite in goodness, infinite in power.' He proceeds to show that the true end of man consists in the contemplation of things Divine, to which he can only fully attain in another life: hence it follows, that the soul must necessarily be immortal.*

In the second book he treats of those things which are beyond reason, but which become known to us by reason admitting and assuming, as a starting point, the indispensable and supernatural works of Christ and of his Church. 'It is by reason alone that we can arrive at a knowledge of God, but never to that of the Trinity, except by first admitting its marvellous and supernatural works. The first is a thing that belongs more especially to philosophy; but the Trinity forms the chief subject of that operation, by which we aim, by the aid of reason, to arrive, through the supernatural and visible operations of the Church, at the invisible Church, and at Christ.† Above all we would say, that as the existence of God is proved by that faith which we see to exist in all men, so the same may be said of the existence of true religion; for every man has, by nature, a tendency to render worship and homage to his God. And could

* From chapter v. to chapter xiv.

† Preface to the second book; see also book i. chapter v.

these, if we may so call them, Divine instincts, spring from nothing real? The Lord, who has implanted them in our hearts, would have deceived us—a thing not to be thought of.* That being admitted, he thus continues: ‘Every form of religion has two kinds of worship: the one external, the other infinitely more noble; that internal worship which manifests itself in a good life, and is the greatest homage, the most true adoration, which a creature can pay to his Creator.† That religion, therefore, which teaches us a better life is of all religions the true one. And what religion can rival the Christian? which leads us to give up all worldly things to attain those which are spiritual; which leads us to the contemplation of God, the sole object of all that can give contentment to our soul and our intellect; and which, the more it understands the more it is capable of understanding; for no finite thing can satisfy that infinite desire which only finds repose in God. But as God is infinite, and the intellect finite, so we have need of grace, to lead us, through the means of a well-spent life, to true beatitude.‡

‘If we wish to search for other proofs, in support of the Christian religion, their number is infinite. The Bible, and most especially the prophecies, the greater part of which have been fulfilled, would suffice to persuade everyone, even the most incredulous.§ We witness the marvellous and supernatural effect in the mind and life of the faithful, who frequently partake of the Sacrament; we see their joy and inward peace of mind depicted with brightness in their countenance.’ He then minutely describes that spiritual beauty, that inward mental tranquillity, and sets forth its noble nature and its power. ‘The mere presence of Pope

* Book ii. chapter i.

† Book ii. chapter iii. to vii.

‡ Book ii. chapter ii.

§ Chapter viii.

Leo was sufficient to curb and convert Attila, King of the Huns; and that of St. Benedict converted Totila. Nothing is more imposing than the aspect of a true and good Christian; nothing so sublime as his peace of mind; by that the martyrs were enabled to die rejoicing in the midst of their torments.*

After having demonstrated the necessity of a true religion, and that the Christian is such, he proceeds to examine the works of Him who was its author. What could Jesus Christ have been if he had not been truly God? To have overturned all other religions and all idols is enough to make us believe that it was a work of God himself; to have created a belief in the Eucharist and in the virginity of His mother. What name could we give to such things if they had been done by fraud? And how could it have been possible by such fraud to have converted almost the whole world; to have raised up an infinite multitude of martyrs; to have overthrown an empire; to have delivered Rome into the hands of a fisherman; and all that in defiance of the priests of the old law, against the power of the empire, of that of almost the whole united world, without arms, without gold, nor by the powers of natural reason? What, indeed, could reason effect in things that transcend all reason? Philosophers, with their everlasting argumentations, did not accomplish more than found a school with a small number of followers; and few of them succeeded in carrying out their precepts in practical life. Christianity, on the other hand, has spread itself over the whole earth, teaching a doctrine above all reason, promising a reward surpassing all imagination, converting the world not only to believe, but to act on that belief. Whoever contemplates such things can do nothing less than pour

* Chapter viii. to chapter xii.

forth hymns of praise to the Lord, and must feel convinced that man has been elevated to God, that Christ is our final end, and that by Him alone can we obtain salvation.*

The third book enters more into particulars, dealing of the articles of faith, of moral precepts, of the laws and ceremonies of the Church. He says, that 'those matters have been expounded by many learned men; and therefore we shall confine ourselves to a general view of them. And, first of all, we would observe, that it is not to be wondered at if some of the dogmas of religion are above human reason. Do we not often see, for example, that one man cannot fathom the thoughts of another man? Ought we, then, to wonder if the creature does not reach the height of the Creator?' After this, he proceeds to set forth the articles of our faith.

We shall not follow the author farther, because he only repeats that which is to be found in the writings of all theologians; but even in that simple exposition we often trace his original mind. In discoursing on the Trinity, he observes, 'that although the unity of three persons be a mystery, we cannot fail, nevertheless, to have found a certain reflection of it throughout nature; and in proportion as we ascend in the scale of creation, we find that image becoming more and more perfect. Observe the vegetable kingdom; and we find that the fruit is connected with the tree only externally. If we go next to the animal kingdom we find that the child remains several months in the mother's womb. If we go higher still, into the generation of thought, we find it much more intrinsically connected with, indeed, almost inseparable from, the mind in which it has arisen. Here then, it may be said, is a true image of the Trinity; we have the mind which thinks, the conception ge-

* Chapter xv.

nerated by it, and the love which it breathes—they truly represent the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. But it is still only too faint an image. When a man raises himself to the contemplation of God, then the image becomes more perfect; for the mind finds itself wrapt and intermingled with the object of its contemplation. Nevertheless, we are still held involved in our senses; for, while here on earth, we can never rise to the height we shall attain in another state of existence. There the contemplation will be much more perfect; it will be as it were a commingling with God, and the brightest image of the Trinity will be reflected in us. If man is to reach such an elevation, what must that be of our Lord? In Him the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost are truly one and the same; His substance, His being, is triune and one. Thus the Trinity becomes an universal law of nature, which, in accordance with that same law, reaches to God; and in proportion as it approaches to Him, the more closely it represents in itself the image of the Divine Trinity. We must consequently feel convinced that it is impossible for us fully to comprehend the mystery; and that is caused by its transcending, and not because it is contrary to, reason.*

'By the same ideas,' he continues, 'we are enabled the better to comprehend and explain the mystery of the Incarnation. The Lord came near unto man, not by the abasement of himself, but by the elevation of the creature, which, although finite, might hope to attain infinite beatitude, solely because the mystery of the Incarnation was given to him almost as an example and a sure pledge of it. Men became excited and intoxicated with joy; they renounced worldly things, acquired an intimacy with heavenly things, and all contributed to defy death.'† In

* Book iii. chapter iii.

† Book iii. chapter vii.

his discourse on original sin, he says that man ought not to grieve to bear the penalty of Adam's offence, because justification by grace was a gratuitous gift conferred on us in Adam, and by him we lost it.*

Descending still more into particulars, he discourses on the constitution and canons of the Church, and observes that 'if among men there be an immutable law in nature, from which all those laws we call positive are derived, and are peculiar to each people, changing according to times and places, so there is also a divine law, of which we fully participate, solely through grace, and which is applicable not to our actions only, but also to our thoughts, even to the most intimate and secret of our hearts. That is the sole source from which all the particular laws of the Church are derived; upon it its canons and constitutions must be founded, just as all positive rights must be founded solely on natural right. And these two primary laws of our nature, that is, the moral law and the natural law, are in reciprocal relation one to the other; however, the first only is the perfect law, the universal law which cleaves to man throughout his whole life; whereas the other is limited to the consideration of his external actions alone, for it is incapable of penetrating the recesses of the mind, the true seat of good and evil. The natural law, therefore, must be considered as the least part of the moral law, with which it neither ought nor ever can be in opposition.' He then concludes, 'We do not on that account depreciate good works and reasonable laws, whether of peoples, philosophers, or heathen emperors, but of all doctrines and books we select that which is true and good, affirming everything that is true and everything that is good to be from God, and to have been made expressly for his elect.'†

* Book iii. chapter ix.

† Book iii. chapter xiii.

He comes finally to treat of the sacraments, which he calls secondary causes of spiritual health; the primary cause being Jesus Christ. They are, in truth, instruments employed by the Lord to confer and augment grace, visible signs that wonderfully represent the invisible end for which we are destined. We shall not stop here to point out in detail the doctrines of Savonarola on the sacraments, in which he follows faithfully the Fathers of the Church, nor to repeat the minute descriptions he gives of them, nor the strange allegories in which he presents them. He considers them all to belong to the one sacrament of the Eucharist, and forming by their union a wonderful world of spiritual harmony and beauty.

After having demonstrated the existence of God and the necessity of a religion, and after having shown the excellence of the Christian religion in all its parts, he comes to the fourth and last book, to refute all other doctrines and religions, and to prove their nullity in comparison with the Christian doctrine. He begins with the philosophers, and points out the strange variety of their judgments on all questions of the highest importance, from which it follows that whosoever abandons religion, finds himself at once in a boundless labyrinth, from which it is not possible for him to extricate himself. He attacks judicial astrology, against which he had already written a small tract;* he attacks the various idolatrous sects, and refutes the Jews with the Bible. He then attacks all heretics and schismatics, but chiefly the Mahometans.† He concludes with defining and defend-

* It was printed in the lifetime of the author, and takes the same view as that contained in the larger work of Pico della Mirandola; in a very compendious form for popular use. 'Astrology is contrary to reason and to religion, destroys individual freedom, and rejects the doctrine of divine providence;' these are the principal arguments of Savonarola, as we have elsewhere pointed out.

† Book iv. chapters iv. and v.

ing the Church Militant: 'It is one, and has a single head, like unto the Church triumphant, of which it ought to offer the image, and which is governed in heaven by Jesus Christ.' He then quotes those passages in the Bible which most clearly maintain the unity of the Church and the authority of the Pope. 'St. John has said that there shall be one sheep-fold and one shepherd; therefore although Christ in heaven be the true and sole head of the Church, he has, however, left St. Peter to represent him on earth saying, "Thou art *Pietro*, and upon this *pietra* (rock) shall I build my Church, and I shall give thee the keys of heaven, and whatever is bound or loosed on earth shall be bound and loosed in heaven." Nor is this to be understood as addressed to Peter only, for God promised that the Church should endure unto the end of the world; therefore, it is to be interpreted as to Peter and his successors. Hence it is manifest, that all the faithful ought to rally round the Holy Father, as supreme head of the Roman Church, mistress of all other Churches, and that *whosoever departs from the doctrine of the Church of Rome departs from Christ*.*

Thus the work concluded, which while it gave an exposition and came forth in defence of Catholicism, was also a full and comprehensive apology of its author. Alexander the Sixth could not have asked for a confession of faith more explicit, nor a more absolute submission to the authority of the Holy See. It is unquestionably true that Savonarola never in the most remote degree attacked any Catholic dogma: his attacks were on those who corrupted them; he revered religion and exalted it enthusiastically; but he was an uncompromising enemy of the papal and clerical abominations, by which it was

* We have quoted here almost the words of the author in this place, in which, with somewhat more of prolixity, he is more explicit than in the passage to the same effect quoted before.

endangered. The 'Triumph of the Cross' was adopted as a text book in schools, and by the congregation *de propaganda fide*; and was considered by the most eminent theologians as one of the most complete treatises as regards the matter, and as one of the most original in the manner in which it is expounded.* We certainly do not find in it a full image of the author, for he was one who rose to a giant stature in controversy, and it was only in the pulpit that the whole man was to be seen. But the highest qualities of his genius and doctrine shine out in that work, which embraces the whole philosophical and religious *scibile* of his time; and where the scholastic and the mystical, the Aristotelian and the neoplatonic philosophies are handled with equal skill, without falling into those excesses to which they were carried at a later period.

In the course of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries these elements of knowledge came to be divided, and each ruling in turn, easily exceeded its limits; the Aristotelian inclined to materialism, the Platonic to pantheism; the mystical smoothed the way for the Reformation. But Savonarola kept these doctrines united in one single synthesis, and made them part of a science of much wider scope. The philosophy of Aristotle, in which he had been educated in his youth, aided him in the exposition of theology; mysticism satisfied the cravings of his warm heart, while the neoplatonic doctrine formed, as it were, a scientific foundation to that mysticism. All combined fed the zeal of the religious mind of one who passed his days in the contemplation of heavenly things, in a fervid admiration of the holy fathers of the Church, and of the sacred Scriptures. A doctrine so diversified gave support to the flights of a free and original mind, steadily directed

* It is very highly spoken of by Father Lacordaire.

to the attainment of truth and to lofty views, and, almost without perceiving it, he laid the foundation of a new philosophy. Whoever judges Savonarola under the influence of some preconceived idea, and without being able to penetrate to the full depth of his mind and intellect, will place himself in such a position that he can view him from one side only; he will thus of necessity diminish the grandeur of his ideas, and moderate the full value of his actions; and he will thus confine, so to speak, to one portion of his age, the man who embraced and was a representative of it in its whole extent.

CHAPTER V.

SAVONAROLA RESUMES PREACHING IN LENT—THE SECOND BONFIRE
OF VANITIES—MORE BRIEFS FROM THE POPE—CONTINUATION
OF THE SERMONS.

THE year 1497 was drawing to a close, and the Republic had become tired of the tardiness with which the negotiations with the Pope proceeded. Domenico Bonsi was sent to Rome as a second ambassador, to plead, along with Bracci, the cause of Savonarola, and to try to bring about some settlement of the question of the tax of a tenth on ecclesiastical property. But the Holy Father postponed every other business until he had settled that of the Friar, whom he wished to get into his power, but which the Republic neither would nor could agree to. If the magistrates were worn out by the endless temporising, Savonarola was still more wearied and impatient under it, and the long silence had become intolerable. For six months he had been shut up in his cell, solely occupied with expounding his doctrine in writings, and defending it against attacks from all sides. He had proved the excommunication to be null; had demonstrated that a good Catholic might resist the unjust demands of a Pope acting under false information, and being himself corrupt. But by his work on the 'Triumph of the Cross' he had erected an imperishable monument to his fame and his innocence. No one could now believe

that he could have had any desire to sow dissension in the Church, he who had so explicitly acknowledged the Papal authority, and who had done no more than enter a protest against the profligate and shameless abuses in it by wicked men. The Pope himself did not dare to arraign his doctrine, and the cardinals, after long inquiry, had been unable to discover one fault in it. The strife between Borgia and the Friar was thus evidently political and personal, and had become more and more outrageous; it promoted the spreading of corrupt habits in Florence, and filled the city with the most strange rumours. Delay, therefore, could lead to no good, and was even dangerous.

At length, on Christmas-day, Savonarola, who would wait no longer, celebrated the three solemn masses, administered the Sacrament to all the friars in the convent, and to a vast multitude of the people who came thither, and he made, besides, a solemn procession with his friars in the piazza of St. Mark. In the meantime, many of his friends, having obtained the consent of the Signory, replaced the platforms and benches in the Duomo, and entreated him to resume his preaching. He did not require much pressing, and mounted the pulpit again on the ensuing first Sunday in Lent (the 11th of February, 1498). The Archbishop of Florence, Lionardo de' Medici, opposed this by an express order; severely prohibiting every clergyman from being present at the sermons, and charging the parish priests to impress upon their flocks the gravity and importance of the excommunication; threatening everyone who should go to hear Savonarola, that not only would confession and the communion be withheld from him, but also permission to be buried in consecrated ground. The Signory, however, speedily put an end to all this; for they sent an intimation to the Archbishop, that, if within two hours he did not surrender his office, he

would be declared a rebel.* Therefore, on the day appointed, the preaching was resumed without any further obstacle; and the novelty of the event and the boldness of the Friar attracted a far greater audience than usual.

The excommunication, the authority of the Pope, and freedom of conscience in resisting unjust commands, were naturally the chief topics of these new discourses: ‘O Lord! Thou hast placed me in the midst of a sea, from whence I neither can nor wish to turn back. But I pray for grace from Thee, that Thou wilt not allow me to say anything that is opposed to the Holy Scriptures and to the Church. Let us now consider the question of the excommunication. Know, then, that God governs the world by secondary causes; and a good prince and a good priest are no other than instruments in the hand of the Lord to govern the people. When, however, the higher agent withdraws himself, the prince or the priest is no longer an instrument—he becomes *a broken rod of iron*.—But, Father, tell us how we shall know that the chief agent is no longer present?—See whether the laws and orders be contrary to that which is the beginning and the root of all wisdom; that is, to a virtuous life and to charity; and if they be contrary, then you may rest assured that the instrument is nothing more than *a broken rod of iron*, and that you are absolved from all obedience. Tell me, now, what is the aim of those who, by means of false information, have procured this excommunication? It is known to everyone that their object is to put an end to virtuous living, and to open the door to every kind of vice. Thus, no sooner did the excommunication arrive, than people ran to taverns, and rushed into profligacy and every kind of vice; and then there was an end of all decency in living.

* Nardi, *Storia di Firenze*, vol. i. p. 137.

Therefore, I tell you, that if I be cursed on earth, I am blessed in heaven.

‘ Our perfect state rests neither upon faith nor upon the laws, but upon charity, and he only who has that within him knows what is necessary for salvation.* In these days nothing is done but the making of laws and canons and pleadings, but the Apostles had no such laws, for they were all actuated by love and charity. All theology, all canonical and civil laws, all the ceremonies of the Church, have charity for their object, and God created the whole world in charity. Whosoever then issues a command that is contrary to charity, which is all in all in our laws, let him be accursed. If an angel, if all the saints and the Virgin Mary, were to give such a command (which assuredly is not possible), a curse must fall upon them. If any law, canon or council should do so, let it be accursed. And if any Pope has ever said the contrary to that which I now tell you, let him be excommunicated. I do not say that there has been such a Pope, but if there were, he would not be an instrument of the Lord, but a *broken rod of iron*.

‘ Some fear that although this excommunication is of non-effect with God, it is powerful as regards the Church. It is enough for me that I am not bound by Christ. O my God ! if I do aught to obtain absolution from this excommunication, send me to hell : to do so I would scruple as I should of a mortal sin.—But, Father, there are some friars who, speaking of this excommunication, say that it is valid, and that they will not grant us absolution.—Do you wish then that I should teach you how you may be absolved ? Alas ! it is better for me to be silent. So far however I will tell you ; do this :’ and here he struck two keys together, signifying by the

* It is to be observed how entirely opposed those sentiments are to the fundamental doctrine of the Reformation, *justification by faith alone*.

sound that money would be all-powerful with the religious men of his day.—‘ But, Father, thou hast told us to let the excommunication come, that they may carry it aloft upon a spear, and that you would then lay open everything.—I reply that all is not come,* and moreover you have not seen all; and yet you have seen how a certain one at Rome has lost a son,† and you have seen that certain persons have died who will go to hell, and you will see their trials.‡ As yet I have not been forced to have recourse to a miracle, but in good time the Lord will make manifest greater power, and already you have seen so many signs that there is no more need of miracles.§ What greater miracle could there be than the spreading of this doctrine in the midst of so many obstacles? Citizens, women, we must lay down our lives for this truth. I turn to Thee, O Lord; Thou didst die for the truth, and I pray that Thou wilt cause me to die solely in Thy defence, for the salvation of Thy elect and of this people.’||

On the 15th of this month he delivered a lecture in St. Mark’s on the duties and character of the priesthood, and he then, with awful words, condemned the vices of the clergy: ‘ When I think of the life of priests, I cannot refrain from tears. O, my brethren, my sons, I pray

* He here refers to a former sermon, which we have already mentioned, in which he made it be understood that when the excommunication should come, he would *turn the key*. But, as we have seen, a true excommunicating brief did not arrive, nor did the letter to the friars of the Church of the Annunziata contain any charge against his doctrine.

† The death of Cæsar Borgia, Duke of Candia.

‡ He perhaps alludes to the case of Bernardo del Nero and the other accomplices, whom Savonarola certainly believed to be guilty, but had done nothing to bring about their condemnation.

§ He did not intend to perform a miracle properly so called, but he certainly thought that when the safety of the Church required it, the Lord, through him, would do something supernatural; and of that he had a firm conviction.

|| Sermons xxii. upon Exodus, and on some of the Psalms, delivered in the Duomo, beginning on the first Sunday in Lent, February 11, 1498; taken down by Lorenzo Violi: Firenze, 1498. See Sermon i.

you to weep over those evils in the Church, that the Lord may call the priests to repentance ; for you must see that a great scourge is hanging over them. It is the clergy who are the maintainers of all sorts of wickedness. Begin with Rome ; there they make a mockery of Christ and the saints ; they are worse than the Turks, than the Moors. Not only are they unwilling to suffer for the sake of God, but they even make a traffic of the sacraments. At this very day benefices are put up to sale, and given to the highest bidder. Do you believe that Jesus Christ will endure this ? Woe, woe to Italy and to Rome. Come forth, come forth, ye priests ; let us see, my brethren, whether we cannot revive in some degree the love of God.—Oh, Father, we shall be sent to prison, we shall be persecuted and put to death.—Be it so, let them murder as they will, they will not tear Christ from my heart ; I wish to die for my God.

‘ You have been to Rome, and know the life these priests lead. Tell me, what do you think of those props of the Church, ye temporal masters ? They have mistresses and squires, and horses and dogs ; their houses are filled with tapestry, silks, perfumes, and servants ; does that appear to you the Church of God ? They fill the world with their pride, which is only equalled by their avarice. Everything is venal, their very bells are rung to satisfy their covetousness, and they are ever calling out for bread, money, and tapers. They are diligent in their attendance in the choir at vespers and other services, because something is to be got by them, but they do not appear at matins, because at that hour there is nothing coming in. They sell benefices, they sell the sacraments, they sell the matrimonial masses ; there is nothing they do not sell. And yet they stand in awe of excommunication ! They do not join *in divinis* with him who comes to preach ; nor do they remember that they have been present at deaths with the friars of St. Mark’s.

Wherever no profit is to be got by it excommunication is of no effect; but where it may be turned to good account, then it is valid. O Lord, Lord, stretch forth thy sword!''*

Before the end of the carnival, he delivered two other sermons. In the first of them, preached on Sexagesima Sunday (February 18) he discoursed on the Pope and his authority, saying: 'I take it for granted that there 'is no man who is not liable to err; we have had 'many wicked Popes who have gone astray! If it 'were true that a Pope could do no wrong, should we 'not then follow his example, and so be saved? You 'will perhaps, say, that in so far as he is a man, a Pope 'may do wrong, but not as Pope; and I say in reply, 'that the Pope may err in his judgments and sentences.† Go read the many constitutions that one 'Pope has made and another has violated, and the multitude of opinions held by some Popes, the contrary of 'which have been held by other Popes.' He then declared that the errors of Popes may be caused either by an evil disposition in the man, or by false information; and then he gave an account of all the briefs that had been issued against him, and of the contradictions they contained; but we will not now stop to narrate these, having elsewhere described them minutely.

'But what can be the cause of so much hostility to me in Rome? You imagine, perhaps, that it is for the sake of religion. Far from it; they wish to change our Government; they wish to establish a tyranny; and they care not whether pure morals be destroyed. These are sustained by our doctrine, and must fall with it. He, therefore, who fights against that doctrine, fights

* *A sermon delivered before many priests, clergy and laity at St. Mark's, February 15, 1497 (old style). The same sentiments are to be found in the sermons on Exodus.*

† And still more in what relates to dogmas.

against the charity of the Gospel, and is, in truth, a heretic. But, in our day, preachers are in the pay of mighty rulers, and they fear to speak the truth, or in any way oppose those who are over them. It was not so when the priesthood was actuated by a true Christian spirit: then St. Paul reproved St. Peter before all *quia reprehensibilis erat*.*

‘These, then, are the reasons which have kept me from writing to Rome, and saying that I had been in error. And as for you, who are always quoting canons and chapters, I tell you that there are many who bring these forward without any knowledge of what they mean. As to your canons, you bring them forth and interpret them according to your own views, and hold that to be legal or illegal according as it suits you, even to the selling of benefices. I have even heard some advise that it should be done openly. I will not now enter into the dispute; but perhaps I may one day demonstrate that to do so is downright heresy.’†

He delivered the last of the sermons of this carnival on Quinquagesima Sunday, treating of the same subject and with the same arguments. ‘Laws are made for a good purpose and ought therefore to be in accordance with reason and with charity. Come forth priest or friar, that I may take thee by the arm, and prove to thee that thou art like a painted image having nothing good within. If the object of a law be good, the quality of the law will be known by its fruits; where the works are good the law is good, where they are evil there can be no good law.—But, Father, if all the world should be against you, what would you do then?—I should stand firm, because my doctrine is the doctrine of a virtuous life, and therefore it comes from God; this ex-

* ‘But when Peter was come to Antioch, I withstood him to the face, because he was to be blamed’—Galatians ii. 2.—Tr.

† Sermons on Exodus. See that delivered on Sexagesima Sunday.

communication is opposed to a virtuous life, and therefore comes from the devil.—O Father, the canons tell us that although the excommunication be unjust, and its error be hidden, we must fear it, to prevent scandal arising.—That is true when you are excommunicated for a sin of which you happen to be innocent, but of which the people believe you to have been guilty; you must submit, in order to avoid scandal. But when your innocence is made manifest to the whole world, as in our case, what scandal is then to be feared? I tell you more, that if you are excommunicated, and that in your desire to submit you are forced to act contrary to charity, then you would not be obliged to submit. If you were prohibited under pain of excommunication *latae sententiæ*, from affording relief to a person in a state of great necessity, I tell you that there is no excommunication that ought to restrain you. Do you suppose that laws are made for a wicked purpose? If unjust sentences were to be valid, a wicked Pope might destroy the whole Church, and compel you to submit; let me tell you that such excommunications are at this day things of traffic, and anyone for four lire may get whom he pleases excommunicated; therefore they are null and void.’

He concluded that sermon with an announcement that on the last day of the carnival he would celebrate mass and pronounce a solemn benediction on the people in the piazza before the convent. ‘When I shall come forth,’ he said, ‘with the sacrament in my hand, it is my desire that some one of you may offer up a fervent prayer to the Lord; for if that work comes not from Him, he may send a fire that will drag me to hell. Offer up besides a similar prayer on each of those days; proclaim it and make it known to all.’* There was a blind superstitious faith in the supernatural, from which Savonarola

* Sermons on Exodus: that on Quinquagesima Sunday.

could never free himself, and which continually threatened to be the cause of his ruin. He was convinced that the Lord would perform some great miracle to prove the truth of his doctrine, when the hour of trial should come. He said and repeated this with an importunity and an ingenuousness which were particularly calculated to awaken in his enemies a desire to take him at his word.

The solemnity on the last day of the carnival was certainly a most singular one. After the solemn mass a vast multitude partook of the sacrament from the hand of Savonarola, and after a procession through the convent he mounted a temporary pulpit erected for the occasion at the principal entrance of the church. He then offered up prayers while the rest of the friars sang psalms; then, turning to the assembled people in the piazza, and reminding them to offer up the prayer that had been agreed upon, he took the sacrament in his hand, and blessing the prostrate and deeply-moved people, he said with a low voice, 'O, Lord, if I do not act with sincerity of mind, if my words come not from Thee, strike me dead this very moment.' An extraordinary state of exaltation was visible in his countenance, making it evident that it was with entire good faith these words were uttered.

After the hour of dinner, the people again walked in procession through the city, for the purpose of collecting alms and to prepare for another *Bonfire of Vanities*. This time, however, they had to endure the attacks and insults of the Compagnacci, some of whom dragged the cloaks from the people's backs, and snatched the red crosses from their hands, while others dealt blows with sticks and stones. At length, when they arrived in the Piazza of the Signori, they found the pyramid of vanities already prepared, the value of which, if we are to believe Burlamacchi, surpassed that of the former car-

nival. On the top of it there was a figure of Lucifer, surrounded by figures of the seven mortal sins. The crowd collected around it chaunted the *Te Deum*, and it was then set fire to, the conflagration rising amid the frenzied shouts of the people. The procession next advanced towards the piazza of the *Duomo*, where it halted to deliver the money collected to the *Buonumini di San Martino*, and then proceeded to the piazza of *St. Mark's*, where they planted a crucifix, when friars and seculars joining hands formed three circles, and moving round it, sung psalms and sacred chaunts.*

Thus ended the carnival of the year 1498, in which passions were again roused, the minds of men were excited, and great expectation created of some extraordinary events being about to happen. The new sermons of Savonarola, whether by the strong reasons he adduced, or by their great boldness, were listened to by the people with great and always increasing favour. They were scarcely brought to a close when they were printed and circulated all over Italy and spread beyond it. He said that letters from new followers came to him even from Germany, and that his doctrine was spreading wide.† A most marked and general outcry against the Court of Rome had begun, and it may easily be imagined to what a state of fury Alexander Borgia was roused. In one of many letters written on the subject it was said, 'They begin at Rome to hear something of the new preachings, and they make a great sensation. I do not doubt but we shall have a determined war, and that we shall very soon come to blows. Our ambassador there begins to have a great fear of it.'‡ In fact, letters arrived daily from the ambassadors at Rome, and Domenico Bonsi wrote, 'I am assailed by a multitude

* Burlamacchi, p. 115 and following; Nardi, p. 140.

† Sermon on Quinquagesima Sunday.

‡ Letter of Strozzi to Piovano di Cascina. See Perrens, Doc. xv.

of cardinals and prelates, all of whom blame the conduct of the Signory very strongly, and speak of the great rage of the Pope. You have many enemies here who are very actively blowing this flame.* In the Court of Rome nothing was talked of but the audacity of the Friar, who will recognise no authority over him except that of God and his own conscience; who calls Pope Alexander *a broken rod*, and has dared to say that whoever believed in the validity of the excommunication was a heretic. Such statements were perpetually sounded in the Pope's ears, whose fury had so much increased, that it threatened from day to day to break out in acts. Among those most assiduous in abetting that rage, the friar Mariano da Gennazzano was conspicuous; he had sworn to give full sway to his vengeance, and the opportunity seemed now near at hand. The charges he brought against the doctrine of Savonarola were so many and so heavy, that he was at length commissioned by the Pope to refute them from the pulpit.

On the first Sunday in Lent, the Church of the Augustines in Rome was filled by an unusual crowd. In front of the great altar were seated many cardinals and prelates of great authority, all of whom had come to hear the sermon of Frà Mariano. The result, however, did not by any means justify the name he had received of a great theologian and orator. He began by speaking of the authority of the Pope, and of the descent of the Holy Spirit upon him, as it had done on the Apostles; but, in place of definitions and refutations, he allowed himself from the outset of his discourse to be led away by passion, screaming and shouting in language bordering on the ludicrous. 'This is the true light,' he said; 'not that of the man of Ferrara, who

* Letter to the Dieci, dated February 17. See Padre Marchese, *Documents*, &c.

preaches by the light of the devil, and dares to say that the Pope is a broken rod of iron. The vile Jew, the scoundrel, the thief, who has stolen money and concealed treasures! O Pope! O Cardinals! how can you suffer such a monster—that hydra! Has the authority of the Church sunk so low, that a rascal like this can dare thus contemptuously to trample it under his feet? O College! O High Priest! be on your guard; you know not him who is plotting against you, and utters things that are enough to darken the sun. But you take no precautions, and he defies you with an indecent sign, which, were it not for the reverence I have for you, I would make.’ Notwithstanding his saying so, he turned to the cardinals, and did make the sign, and roared like a maniac. The audience were much displeased by a sermon in so vulgar a style; and the cardinals, who came there with the expectation of hearing a reasoned refutation, could not avoid marking their disapprobation by constantly shaking their heads. Thus Gennazzano found himself again discomfited.*

In the meanwhile, Savonarola, ever indefatigable, brought out a new treatise on the government of the city of Florence—*Trattato circa il reggimento e governo della città di Firenze*.† He had composed it at the request of the late Signory, and, as he says in his preface, willingly accepted the invitation; ‘for, having preached upon the truth of faith, on the simplicity of

* All this is minutely described in an anonymous letter entitled *Copia d’una lettera venuta da Roma, della predica di M. Mariano da S. Gallo, contro a Frà Girolamo*. Gennazzano’s monastery was at S. Gallo.

† It was printed in the author’s life-time. S. L. et A. See the edition of it by Audins de Rians, Firenze, 1848. He believes it to have been written in 1493, because it was Salviati who was Gonfaloniere in that year, and in January and February of 1498, who had asked him to compose it. A glance, however, at the tract itself is enough to show that he continually refers to facts that had taken place after 1493.

a Christian life, on future events, and on good government, he had refrained on that account from composing a special treatise.* He had now written the treatise, believing that it would be useful to the people, and necessary in his ministerial office, to prove how he had always preached sound doctrine, in no way in opposition to the Church.' The first part of this short tract shows that man, being a free agent, has need of government, and that the government of one is best, when the prince is a good man. Such a mode of government, however, is not adapted for every people; and the variable, restless, and ambitious nature of the Florentine people, makes a civil government—in other words, a Republic—necessary for them. In the second part he treats of the government of a single individual, when the prince is wicked, or that which we call a tyranny. He then describes a tyrant, and the evils he causes: perhaps one of the most eloquent passages to be found in his writings; certainly more correct and polished than in his sermons. In the third and last part, he treats of that civil government which resides wholly in a Great Council, which should alone have the power to appoint to offices, in order to avoid, at the same time, popular anarchy and the tyranny of a few. He concludes by describing the misery of a tyrant, and the felicity of those who on earth, as in heaven, govern with liberality. He keeps, however, altogether to generalities, intending, in some more quiet time, to write a more serious and elaborate work in Latin. At the time he published it, amidst such great agitation, he treated the subject solely in a popular form; and this, in fact, is the most known and most popular of all his writings, because of its simple, energetic, and eloquent style.

He also at this time, without being in the least

* The treatises to which he here refers are, the *Triumph of the Cross*, on *Simplicity in a Christian Life*, and on *Prophetic Truth*.

dismayed, again mounted the pulpit, and, from the beginning of Lent, entered upon a regular course of sermons. He expressed his joy that the carnival had been passed in a devotional spirit, condemned the mischief done by the Compagnacci, dwelt upon a virtuous life, and then turned to that which had become almost the sole subject of his discourses: 'O Rome, what do I ask of thee? a bull recommending a virtuous life. More I would not ask of thee. But, instead of that, they try here to obtain a bull which would destroy all hope of such a course.' He began to be somewhat more moderate, hoping to make progress without new difficulties being thrown in his way; but the Pope had become more and more enraged, threatened the city with an interdict, and the confiscation of the property of the Florentine merchants settled in Rome, and intimated his intention to oblige every other State to do the same, under pain of excommunication.

His impetuosity was in some degree moderated by the more prudent cardinals, who besought him to consider how the affairs of Savonarola had caused so universal a movement, that a schism in the Church everywhere was to be apprehended; that nothing more was wanting than a dignitary of the church, of some reputation, to head the movement, and such an one would easily be found in the Cardinal of San Pietro in Vincola.* These considerations checked in some degree the first impulses of the Pope, and determined him to send a very threatening brief to the Signory on the 26th of February. In that, he said, 'having been informed of very pernicious error being disseminated by that son of iniquity, Girolamo Savonarola, we required him to abstain entirely from preaching, and to come to us to apologise and recant; to that command he paid no obedience. We commanded

* Afterwards Pope Julius II. Nardi, *Storia di Firenze*, vol. i. p. 138.

him under pain of excommunication to unite the congregation of St. Mark's with the Tusco-Roman Congregation; and to that command he was also disobedient, incurring thereby, *ipso facto*, the threatened punishment. That excommunication we ordered to be read and published in your principal churches, declaring that all would become subject to it who listened to, discoursed with, or had any dealings with the said Friar Girolamo. But we have now heard that he, to the great injury of religion and the souls of the people, continues to preach, setting at nought the authority of the Holy See, and denying the validity of the excommunication. We therefore command you, as you value sacred obedience, to send the said Girolamo to us under safe custody; and if he shall turn to repentance, we will receive him with paternal feelings, for we desire not the death of a sinner, but his conversion. At all events separate him, as a corrupt member, from the rest of the people, and keep him so confined and guarded that he may not by conversation with anyone propagate new scandals. If you refuse obedience to these commands, then, that the dignity and authority of the Holy See may be maintained, we shall be forced to have recourse to an interdict upon your city, and to other measures still more effective.*

Another brief arrived at the same time addressed to the Canons of the Duomo, ordering that they should absolutely prohibit Savonarola from preaching in their church. In fact, from the 2nd of March, the third Sunday in Lent, he had continued his sermons in St. Mark's; in the first of which he said: 'We gave you a proof of courage when it was called for, and we are ready

* This brief, the existence of which was before unknown, we found in the Riccardian library, cod. 2053. Meyer applies the date of Feb. 26, 1498, to another brief, which we shall refer to hereafter. See Appendix P.

to give other proofs when the occasion arises ; but we are rather disposed to observe moderation.' He was thus endeavouring to avoid further causes of offence.

The majority of the new Signory for the months of March and April proved to be hostile to Savonarola ; three only of them being favourable, and the other six decided enemies, the Gonfaloniere being among the latter. He was a cousin of Piero de' Medici, and originally bore the same name, which in the revolution of 1494 he changed for that of Piero Popoleschi. But the blood which ran in his veins was still *palleschian*. He had not united with the Bigi, but had given himself up entirely to the party of the Arrabbiati, and consequently was one of the principal persecutors of the Friar. For all these reasons the Signory no sooner received the Pope's brief than they resolved to hold a meeting in order to throw upon it the responsibility of the course that might be taken, and which they knew would be very generally hostile. On the 3rd of March, therefore, they asked for advice, how the affairs of Pisa should be best provided for, how the low state of the finances should be met, and finally what course should be taken with regard to the Friar, in consequence of the brief from Rome. The last was, in fact, the true object they had in view in calling this meeting.

The Gonfalonieri of the companies, the Buoni Uomini and the other magistrates, kept to generalities ; they declared it to be necessary to mitigate the anger of the Pope by making him understand that any attempt to lay violent hands on the Friar would place the city in the greatest jeopardy. Battista Ridolfi made a long speech in the name of the Dieci de' Libertà e Pace,* as it

* The Dieci della Guerra has received that new designation by a law patronised by Savonarola, at the commencement of the popular government.

belonged to them to reply more particularly to the several demands of the Signory. He gave a very sad picture of the state into which the Republic had fallen. 'We have expended,' he said, '20,000 ducats, and of the monthly 15,000 which you had assigned to us, we have received almost nothing. Our enemies multiply daily, Venetian vessels are blocking up Leghorn, and the dearth of provisions, and disorders among the soldiers, prevent any movement being made, however necessary. The repairs that are wanted at Leghorn, a place of the highest importance for our supplies of wheat, for trade, and for the ordnance, have been suspended for want of funds. Volterra, a city so necessary to guard, is wholly desolate; the high grounds have been abandoned, and on the very first attack it would fall into the hands of the enemy. The low lands are in the same danger; Pescia and all its surrounding works are quite exposed to the enemy. From the region above Vagliano, a most important position, the commander, the commissaries, and the soldiers are all calling out for pay. The Pisans have begun to make inroads in the Maremma, and malaria will do the rest. It is, therefore, our most earnest desire that your excellencies should take all possible measures to prevent the whole power of the State from being destroyed; and that, happen what may, we may be justified in the sight of God.' He then entered upon the question of Savonarola: 'However desirous your excellencies may be to avoid giving offence to his Holiness, let not the honour of God and of the Republic be lost sight of. It will be necessary, therefore, to examine and weigh well all that the Pope has said, to enquire whether he be justly incensed or not, and whether that which he commands be or be not just and proper. There can be no doubt of the Friar being a man of pure life and of great learning, that he has never been the author of any evil in Florence, but, on the contrary, has been the author of

much that is good, both spiritual and temporal. If, therefore, the Pope has different opinions on these matters, it must arise from his being incorrectly informed, and if so, he ought to be immediately written to and have the truth laid before him: but if, notwithstanding, as is believed, matters will take a different course, then the only thing to be provided for is the honour of the city. For,' Ridolfi concluded, 'the letters that have come from Milan show that the Pope has all at once changed, and has assumed a very threatening aspect towards the Republic, not only on account of the preachings of the Friar, but for other weighty reasons.* Our answers, therefore, may be very easy and short. Let your excellencies bear in mind that the Friar is extremely popular, and remember how much mischief was done by the banishment of friar Bernardino.†

The citizens, seated on their respective benches, replied, that the brief was very displeasing to them, and that to banish the Friar from Florence would expose the city to the greatest peril; but in order to show the Pope some sign of obedience, they might prevent his preaching in the Duomo, which they could the more easily do, as, on the preceding day, he had retired into his convent of St. Mark's.‡

The Signory could not do otherwise than comply with the opinions of the meeting, expressed by so large a majority, and on the following day, the 4th of March, letters were sent to Rome by the Dieci to the ambassador, together with one from the Signory to the Pope. In the latter it was stated that Savonarola,

* He refers to reasons wholly of a political nature; such as the Pope's desire to change the government in Florence.

† Frà Bernardino da Monte Feltro had been banished in the time of Piero de' Medici. See Parenti, *Storia di Firenze*.

‡ All these speeches are given in the report of the meeting to be found in the *Archivio delle Riformazioni*. See the *Frammenti di Pratica*, as quoted above.

after the receipt of the last brief, had, in obedience to it, retired to St. Mark's; they praised his doctrines, his life, his prophecies; they accused his enemies, who they said, hate light more than darkness, and thus concluded: 'It is not possible for us to obey the command of your Holiness, not only because we should do what would be an indignity to the Republic and unjust to a man who has deserved well of his country, but because, even if we were willing, it could not be done without producing a popular tumult, and great injury to many persons, so great is the favour which the Friar has won by his integrity. It grieves us much that such things should have estranged the mind of your Holiness from us, depriving us of all the hopes that had hitherto been held out to us for the material advantage of our Republic. Nevertheless we shall continue, as we have always been, faithful to the Church and the Catholic faith; at the same time declaring, that we have at heart the good of our Republic above all other advantages.*

It is, indeed, not very easy to comprehend how a Signory so hostile to Savonarola could write so strongly in his favour.† It may be that it was only the language of diplomacy which they were obliged to employ, by the record of what took place at the meeting; while they at the same time took care to conciliate the Pope; who, nevertheless, replied with undiminished violence. Perhaps, also, the Dieci, who had always been friends of the Friar, or the Secretary of the Republic, had contributed to the mild tone of the letter. Certain it is, that it was sent in the name of the new Signory, and that Savonarola quietly continued his preachings at St. Mark's.

The church there not being large enough for the

* Documents of Padre Marchese.

† Perrens argues from it that the Signory could not in truth be hostile to Savonarola; but the facts we shall presently relate place the matter beyond all doubt.

crowd who came, men only were admitted. The women went first to the church of San Lorenzo; and afterwards upon the canons refusing to admit them, to that of St. Nicholas, in the Via Cocomero, to hear the sermons of Frà Domenico of Pescia. Such, however, was the eagerness of their solicitations to Savonarola that they might hear his voice, that he found himself obliged to give up Saturday to them.*

During this last Lent, the constant subject of his discourses was—to determine how and when it would be possible for a Pope to do wrong: ‘To say that the Pope, as such, can do no wrong, is as much as to say a Christian, in so far as he is a Christian—a religious person, in so far as he is religious—cannot err; but, as a man, the Christian, the religious person, and the Pope, may err.† In so far as he is Pope, he cannot err, because then he would be wanting to his duty;

* Burlamacchi.

† Sermons on Exodus, sermon vii. Machiavelli speaks of this sermon and the preceding, in his ‘Letter to a Friend,’ written March 8, 1498. In that he does not show himself at all favourable to Savonarola, because, as we have already said, in his early youth, he rather leaned to the party of the Arrabbiati; and it was only in his mature age that his opinion of the Friar became modified. He then expressed himself in the following terms:—‘Having gone to hear the Friar in his own place, and observing with what boldness he began his sermon, and how he continued it, it awoke in me no small admiration for him. He began with terrific expressions, with a kind of reasoning adapted to the capacity of superficial hearers, to show his followers to be most excellent, and his opponents to be most wicked; resorting to all such terms as would discredit the adverse party and strengthen his own; concerning which things, having been present, I will give an example.’ Thus, after giving a minute account of his sayings, he gives the following:—‘I begin to turn over the leaves of your books, ye priests, and to deal with you in such a way that dogs would not eat you.’ Respecting such an one as would have become a tyrant, he spoke of him in a way that it was easy to conjecture that he spoke of a person who is about as near to a tyrant as you are to heaven.’ ‘As to the Pope, he spoke of him in a style that you would only apply to the most wicked of men; and in this way he, in my opinion, gave in to the temper of the times, colouring his lies accordingly.’ These last words, although very exaggerated, with reference to Savonarola, show how great a spirit of opposition to Rome must then have existed.

but when he does err, he is no longer Pope; and if he commands that which is wrong, he does not command as Pope.*—Oh, but Friar, the Pope is God on earth, and the Vicar of Christ!—That is true; but God and Christ command that we should love our brother, and do that which is good. Therefore, if the Pope should command you to do a thing contrary to charity, and you were to do it, you would then be willing that the Pope may do that which God does not do.† “The Pope may err not only through false information, but also sometimes from a want of a due regard for charity, as was the case with Pope Boniface VIII., who was a wicked Pope, to whom the evil one said—‘I want you to destroy that order of preaching friars. He came in like a fox, and died like a dog.’ And our order soon fought and resisted the Popes who would injure them.”‡ And do you not see the same things tried this very day? If I were to depart from religion, and do evil, a bull would forthwith be made out for me and a license granted; but for that which is good, no place would be allowed us.§ That which has been the cause of so much corruption in the Church is the temporal power. When the Church was poor, then it was holy; but so soon as temporal power was given to it, then the spiritual power was lowered; it fell beneath the dust of riches and earthly things, and began to show its pride.”||

On this occasion Savonarola had the boldness to touch more distinctly upon the subject of a General Council, on which he had hitherto been very cautious, alluding to it under the metaphorical saying of *giving a turn to the*

* Sermon xi. † Sermon xviii. ‡ Sermon vii. § Sermon xvi.

|| Sermon xii. One of the arguments he most frequently made use of in these sermons was the indelible character of the priesthood. The Pope, he said, cannot remove it; it accompanies it even into hell. Excommunication does not render the administration of the sacraments inefficacious; this is also the opinion of St. Thomas Aquinas. See sermon xii. and xiii.

key, or something to the same purpose. He began with a Latin quotation, *venerunt simul, et congregaverunt cunctos seniores filiorum Israel*.* ‘This is an important matter, but I wish to keep it back a little while, and put it in my purse, for the time for bringing it out is not yet arrived. I will say no more than this: Tell me, Florence, what does a council mean? It is no longer in the memory of man what sort of a thing a council is; which is as much as to say, that your children will know nothing about it; and that is as much as to say that nothing of the kind takes place in our day.—O, Father, surely people can meet together?—You say what is very likely to be true, but I am not sure that you understand it in the sense which I do. A council means that the Church is brought together, that is, all good abbots, prelates, and secular clergy, belonging thereto. But observe, there can be no Church unless the grace of the Holy Spirit be there, and where now shall that be found? Perhaps only in some low-born man, and on that account you may say, that it is not possible to make a council. In a council they would have to appoint reformers, who might reform justly; and who would such reformers be? In a council also they would punish the wicked clergy, and depose a bishop who had been convicted of simony and schism. O, what a multitude would have to be deposed! Perhaps not one would be left!’ ‘That is the reason why the council cannot be assembled. What then is to be done? Pray to the Lord that it may for once be assembled, to favour and aid those who wish to do what is right, and to defeat the wicked.’†

From expressions such as these it may now be clearly seen that Savonarola was only waiting for a favourable

* ‘And Moses and Aaron went and gathered together all the elders of the children of Israel.’ Exodus iv. 29.—Tr.

† Sermon xiii.

opportunity when he might venture to attempt to get a General Council called, where Borgia might be openly attacked and the Church reformed. It may easily be imagined how words such as these would enrage the Holy Father ; but to what extent the papal ire had arrived, what and how many arts Borgia employed effectually to defeat the Friar and bring over the Republic to his designs, can only be known by following the facts of history. The drama becomes more complicated from day to day, and new passions and new plots hasten it on rapidly to its conclusion.

CHAPTER VI.

INTERVIEW OF THE FLORENTINE AMBASSADORS WITH THE POPE—
NEW BRIEFS AND NEW THREATS—SAVONAROLA PROHIBITED
FROM PREACHING—HIS LAST LENT SERMONS, AND FAREWELL
TO THE PEOPLE—HIS LETTERS TO THE POPE AND THE SOVE-
REIGN PRINCES.

THE letter of the Signory in defence of Savonarola arrived at Rome on the evening of the 6th of March, and the next day the Florentine ambassadors, Domenico Bonsi and Alessandro Bracci, went with it to the Pope, who, after hearing it read by his secretary, was greatly incensed. ‘Your Signory,’ he said, ‘have written a very bad letter to me; I have not been ill-informed, because I have read the sermons of your Friar, and have spoken with those who heard them. He has the audacity to say that the Pope is a broken rod of iron, that it is heretical to give credit to the excommunication, and that rather than ask absolution from it he would go to hell.’ The Holy Father, becoming more excited as he proceeded, expressed his displeasure that the Signory should grant a free license to the Friar to preach; adding, that even his retiring to St. Mark’s was not in consequence of any order given by them, and declared it to be his desire that the preaching of the Friar in any place should cease. He threatened to lay an interdict upon the whole city, and in such terms that the ambassadors concluded their report to the Dieci in these words: ‘We feel certain that this will

happen, without his respecting anyone; that they had done what they could to defend the character and doctrine of Savonarola; that the Pope, having heard what they had to say, replied, that he had not condemned him for his sound doctrine, but solely because, having been excommunicated, he would not ask for absolution, evidently from contempt of the Holy See.

The audience being over, and the ambassadors having taken leave, the Holy Father, in the presence of many bishops and cardinals, gave full vent to his Spanish fury; threatening ruin to the Republic and the Friar; so much so, that many of the bystanders went to Bonsi and prayed him to persuade the Signory of the necessity of their taking some step, and especially to prevent the preaching, if they wished to save the Republic from some grievous damage; that Piero de' Medici, in fact, had made many great offers, and great promises, if they would restore him to Florence; and that the Pope was not only determined to lay the city under an interdict, but to prohibit, under pain of excommunication, all Christians from having any dealings with Florentine merchants. Such was the state of disfavour into which Florentine affairs had fallen at Rome, that the ambassadors wrote that they were in danger of their lives. Bonsi had been wounded by some one whom he believed to have found protection at Court, and who was probably an assassin employed by the Medici. The ambassadors reported all this in a letter to the Dieci dated the 7th of March,* and on the 9th of the same month wrote to the Signory,† enclosing a final brief from the Pope, in much more threatening and violent terms than he had hitherto made use of. 'We never imagined,' he said, 'that your audacity would get to such a pitch in the affairs of the Friar Girolamo Savonarola: it is almost as if you

* Padre Marchese, Doc. xx.

† Ibidem, Doc. xxi.

were contending with us in a lawsuit, and not, as it was your duty to do, rendering to Cæsar the things which are Cæsar's, and unto God the things which are God's. But it is now necessary to put an end to these letters and briefs, which multiply indefinitely. Know then, and of this be assured, that this same Friar Girolamo has been excommunicated, not at the instigation of anyone, nor upon false information, but by reason of his disobedience to our commands, in refusing to unite with the Tusco-Roman Congregation.* We do not condemn him for his good works; but it is our pleasure that he shall come to ask pardon for his insolent pride, which we will willingly grant, when he humbles himself at our feet. Your conduct has greatly incensed us; and we shall never cease until reparation be made to the honour and dignity of the Holy See, which that vile worm has dared, through your assistance, to offend. Ponder well upon the situation in which you have placed yourselves; for if you show yourselves ready to be obedient, we shall be disposed to grant to you the things you have asked, for the material advantage of your Republic.† At all events, let me have no more letters, but deeds; for we are firmly resolved not to tolerate your disobedience any longer; and we shall lay an interdict upon your city, which shall have full force so long as you continue to give countenance to the monstrous idol you protect.'‡

* This confirms all that we have said on the excommunication brief.

† The tenth tax on ecclesiastical property, and assistance to subjugate Pisa.

‡ Perrens published this brief without any date, from the MS. in the library of St. Mark's, at Venice. Meyer gives it the date of February 26 (see p. 145, note 2). The other brief, which we discovered in the Riccardian library, was quite unknown to both those authors, and which corresponds better with the chronology of facts, while that quoted above must have been written some days after February 26, and corresponds perfectly with what Bonsi says in his letters of the 7th and 9th of March. We met with a second copy of it in the Riccardian library, cod. 2053, but it is without date.

The receipt of such a brief made the Signory resolve to call a meeting; and on the 14th of March, twenty-five citizens from each of the quarters of the city were summoned to meet the magistrates. After a long discussion, they came to no decision, but met again on the 17th of the same month. On that occasion Giovanni Berlinghieri, a most determined enemy of the Friar, was chosen to preside; and he, supported by Pietro Popoleschi, succeeded in getting a resolution passed, in spite of a considerable opposition, entirely prohibiting Savonarola from preaching.* Notice of this was instantly despatched to Rome; and immediately there came from the Pope a joyful letter, praising the Signory to the skies, making great promises, and earnestly recommending that not one of the friars of St. Mark's should have permission to preach.†

On the same day that the meeting was held, Savonarola preached to a congregation of women. His sermon was full of affection, and was almost a hymn of praise to the Lord, in a poetical strain of much sorrow: 'Lord, we ask not tranquillity from Thee, nor that tribulation shall cease; but we ask for the Spirit, we ask for Thy love. Grant unto us fortitude and grace to overcome adversity. We would that Thy love should descend upon the earth. Thou seest that the wicked become ever more wicked and incorrigible. Stretch forth, then, Thy hand and Thy power: nothing remains for me but to weep.' That same evening he received the order to desist from preaching; and next day, being the third Sunday in Lent, he delivered his last sermon, in which he took leave of the people.

He began, in a scholastic style, on primary and se-

* Nardi, p. 142. We have not been able to find any other notice of this meeting than the following: 'Die xvii. 1497.' 'Omnes, eodem die, decreverunt Fratri Hieronymo, ut omnino a predicatione cessaret.' See *Frammenti di Pratiche*.

† See Padre Marche, doc. xxii.

condary causes, demonstrating that in the absence of secondary causes, we must look to the primary, and then showing the application of the principle. 'Thus, in the Church, the faithful Christian ought first to apply to his parish priest or his confessor: whom failing, to the bishop, to the Pope; and finally, when the whole ecclesiastical power is corrupt, you must turn to Christ, who is the first cause, and say—Thou art my confessor, bishop, and Pope; look to the Church, which is falling into ruin; let Thy vengeance begin!—O Friar! you would weaken ecclesiastical authority.—That is not true; I have always been submissive, and do now submit myself, to the correction of the Roman Church; I in no degree weaken, but rather strengthen it. But I will not submit to an infernal power; and every power that is contrary to what is good, is not of God, but of the devil.'* He then directed his discourse to

* It will not perhaps be without its use, if in this place I refer to some ideas of Father Benedetto on the church, for he was one of the most faithful followers of Savonarola (*Vulnera Diligentis*, lib. i. cap. 9, MS. Magliabech. cl. 34, cod. 7). One of the interlocutors says, 'the Church is nothing else than the congregation of the faithful, or *sive unitas iustorum*. The other adds. Why not say absolutely that the Pope is the Church? Because the Pope is properly not the supreme head of the Church, but is the vicar of the supreme head, Jesus Christ. When he quitted the earth, he left his authority with his vicar, with power to bind and loosen; justly, however, not unjustly. Then, resumes the first interlocutor, Jesus Christ and his elect form properly the Church, and we should be incorrect in saying, that the Church is composed of all those who believe. Nevertheless, it is not to be denied, that the Pope is *in a certain sense* the Church, nor that in that respect the Pope may err.' 'Papa quidem canonice, ut oportet, dicendo rem ad fidem et christianos mores pertinentem errare penitus non potest. Et ita faciens, dicitur tota Ecclesia quæ errare non potest, virtualiter in ipso Papa fecisse. And briefly in substance, it may be said, as in common parlance it is said, inas-much as the Pope when he decrees according to the canons does not err, it may be said that the entire Church cannot err that is virtually in the Pope. Truly the Church cannot err in its true member, that is, in some true Christian, therefore the Christian, inasmuch as he is a Christian, cannot err, just as the Pope as Pope cannot possibly err, and it would be blasphemy to say the contrary.' 'But when the Pope judges in his own cause, as Alexander VI. did, when he condemned the prophet (that is, Savonarola), because he accused him of having been

the great difficulties he had met with in preaching his doctrine; to the fierce struggle he had had to sustain; and to the irresistible impulse by which he had been forced along:—

‘ Sometimes, on coming down from the pulpit, I have on reflection said to myself— I will no longer speak of nor preach on those things, but will abstain from them, and leave the rest to God. But when I again stood up in the pulpit, I could not contain myself, nor do otherwise than I have done. To speak of the Lord has become to me like a consuming fire shut up in my bones and in my heart; and I found it impossible to restrain myself nor cease from speaking out, for I felt my whole being, as it were, on fire, and that I was inflamed by the Spirit of the Lord. But when I come down, I say to myself, I will no more speak of those things; and yet, when I have again stood up in this place, I can no longer curb my tongue, nor refrain from uttering these sentiments. O Lord! O Holy Spirit! Thou raisest up persecutions and tribulations against Thee; Thou stirrest up the waves of the sea like the wind; Thou rousest the tempests! Then I say, cease; but He replies—I can do no otherwise.’ ‘ Let us, then, submit to the Lord’s will; He is the master to apply the instrument to its proper purpose; and when He has no longer any use for it, He will cast it away, as was done to Jeremiah when he was stoned. And so it will be with us when we shall have done our work. We are satisfied that it is the Lord’s will, that the greater

guilty of an unjust work, in that case, it is virtually not the Church who judges, but the Pope in his own cause. And in such a case he may err either through ignorance, or culpably, and then he is no longer himself, but a corrupt member of the Church.’ ‘ Thus, likening the Church to a human body, I say, and conclude—the Holy Church has but one supreme head in heaven, and He is Jesus Christ, the Son of God; and it has only a neck on earth, depending on the head, and that is the Holy Father, the High Priest.’ Such language as this, although rude and uncultivated, gives us an insight into the ideas of the followers of Savonarola, upon the authority of the Pope and of the Church.

the evil here on earth, a greater crown will be found in heaven.'

He then announced the order he had received, and took leave of his audience. 'Yesterday at half-past eight o'clock in the evening, there came an ambassador from him who rules, who said that I was requested, out of respect, to abstain from preaching. I replied, Do you come from your masters? Yes. I also must consult my master; to-morrow I will give my answer. So far I answer now, that the Lord has heard you, and yet not heard you: he has heard you in so far as to make me abstain from preaching, but he has not heard you in so far as regards your safety. New disasters are coming upon Florence, misfortunes will fall upon her. You are in fear of the interdicts, but the Lord will send one who will take life and property from the wicked. We shall effect by prayer what we cannot effect by preaching; and we recommend all good men to do the like. O Lord, I recommend them to Thee, and I pray Thee not to defer any longer the fulfilment of Thy promises.'*

Thus terminated the preaching of Savonarola on the 18th of March of the year 1498, which he had continued in Florence for eight years, without any other interruption than a short stay at Bologna, and some excursions of a few days to Prato, Pistoia, Siena and Pisa, where he went to preach. He was every day in the pulpit during Advent and Lent, and in the intervals he preached on festival days, so that three thick volumes of sermons appeared every year. He had thus spent his life and wasted his bodily strength for the moral, political and material benefit of that same Florentine people who now condemned him to silence. He was, however, not a man to be taken unawares. From the day that the last brief arrived from Rome, he saw clearly what his position was, and at once

* The last of the sermons on Exodus.

decided on the part he was to take, and on the 13th of March he, with all loyalty, informed the Pope of his intention. He was of so noble and generous a disposition that even while determining to wage war against so subtle and dark an enemy, he thought it right to give him warning, that he might be ready with his defence. ‘Most blessed Father,’ he said, ‘I always considered that it was the duty of a good Christian to defend the faith and to rectify manners; but in doing so I have met with nothing but sorrow and tribulation; I have found no one who would assist me. I looked with hope to your Holiness, instead of which you have joined the ranks of my enemies, and have given power to fierce wolves to torture me. Nor were the reasons which I brought forward ever listened to; I had not to apologize for any sin committed, but to prove the truth of my doctrine, my innocence, and my submission to the Church. I can thus have no longer any hope in your Holiness, but must turn to Christ alone, who chooses the weak of this world to confound the strong lions among the perverse generations. He will assist me to prove and sustain, in the face of the world, the holiness of the work for whose sake I so greatly suffer; and He will inflict a just punishment on those who persecute me, and would impede its progress. As for myself, I seek no earthly glory, but long eagerly for death. May your Holiness no longer delay, but look to your salvation.’*

* We follow the text of the Riccardian MS. No. 2053, which Meyer has also followed. Burlamacchi has given a paraphrase of this letter, calling it a *correction given to the Pope*. Other contemporary writers, as we shall show hereafter, have called it a terrible letter. Rudelbach (*Savonarola und seine Zeit.*, Doc. xii.), follows a bolder reading than ours, but does not tell us from whence he got it. Among other things we find the following sentence—‘I am therefore prepared to support this truth, for which we now suffer so great evils; to prove it, I say, against you and all my enemies, by reasons both natural and supernatural, by Divine authority. And these things shall in this way make manifest,’ &c.

He determined to make a last effort to accomplish the assembling of a General Council, in which he would plead his own cause, condemn the life and disgraceful habits of Alexander Borgia, and declare his election void, as having been obtained by simony. He wished also to prove him a heretic and an infidel and the chief cause of all the evils by which the Church was distracted; for which purpose he seems to have been in possession of some documents that had not seen the light. It was to these that he alluded in his often repeated phrases—*One day we shall turn the key—we shall cry—Lazarus come forth*, and such like. That day had at length arrived, and he had taken his resolution.

To call a General Council without the authority of the Pope, and in opposition to his will, was not then considered as it would be now, an audacious act of insubordination and of violence.* According to a resolution of the Council of Constance, the Pope himself was bound to assemble a Council every ten years; and, should he neglect to do so, the Sovereign Powers might collect the scattered members of Christianity to represent the universal Church. Charles VIII., who had always been in favour of a Council, instigated by Savonarola, by the Cardinal of San Pietro in Vincola, and others, was very often on the point of taking the initiative; but he was desirous of obtaining the solemn opinion of the doctors of the Sorbonne as to the authority he possessed to take such a step; and they, on the 7th of January, 1497, gave an opinion in favour of the assembling of a

* Theodore Brie in his *Storia del Concilio di Costanza*, says as follows: 'Nam et beata Petri cathedra, ut nosti, plerumque pastore vacavit. Imo et ipsa, eadem quam et sponsam meam nomino, sæpissime vacasti; nec propter hoc quisquam autumet te non mansisse sponsam meam. Sufficeret namque unus justus, etsi omnes cæteri essent hæretici, ut et ego sponsus tuus semper et essem et remanerem.' In *Rudelbach*, page 32.

Council.* This, however, did not suffice to bring to a decision the constantly irresolute mind of that king, as he always began to doubt the nearer he came to the resolution of undertaking any enterprise; it was enough, however, to give encouragement to Savonarola and to the great number of persons who saw in a Council the only way by which the evils in the Church could be corrected, and schism prevented. These ideas found the more favour as they were maintained by a strong party among the cardinals, at the head of whom was the Cardinal of San Pietro in Vincola,† the constant enemy of Borgia, who by bribery had defeated him at the last election to the papacy; but to whom there was every reason to expect he would succeed in case of death or deposition. He went about openly declaring the election of Borgia to be null, always called him the infidel, the heretic; and many of the things he had said when a cardinal, he confirmed when he became Pope, by a bull dated the 14th of January, 1505.‡

The ground was therefore prepared for the step which Savonarola wished to take. He had long, but in vain, expected that King Charles would have decided; but now time pressed, and delays were most dangerous. He determined, therefore, to throw down the gauntlet, and boldly to brave the anger of the Pope. He first called together some of his most faithful friends, who were connected with the Florentine ambassadors at foreign courts,

* See Padre Marchese *Storia del Convento di S. Marco*, p. 225 and following.

† Savonarola during his trial was continually questioned as to his connection with that Cardinal; and he answered, that he never had any intercourse with him, but that he knew that the Cardinal was favourable to his ideas.

‡ *Raynald*, ad ann. 1492. We again refer the reader to Padre Marchese, p. 225 and following, because in our inference as to the sense of his words in a note in our first volume (2, page 367,) by not being sufficiently clear, it is made to appear as if we wished to attribute to him the opinion that the election of Borgia was null, a thing the most foreign to a writer so scrupulously Catholic.

and left it to them to keep those ambassadors informed by some means of what was going on. Among those friends were Simone del Nero and Domenico Mazzinghi, the first of whom wrote to his brother, who was ambassador in Spain, the other to the ambassador in France, who was his most intimate friend. They did all in their power to extol the doctrine and life of Savonarola, inclosed copies of his letter to the Pope, giving such a fearful representation of things as would confound the world. They in this way impressed upon their correspondents the necessity of persuading the princes to assemble a Council in order to remedy the evils in the Church; adding, that perhaps Savonarola himself had written to the most powerful sovereigns in Europe. These letters were sent about the end of May,* and soon after Savonarola wrote his celebrated letters to the princes; that is, to the kings of France, Spain, England, Hungary, and the Emperor of Germany.†

‘The moment of vengeance had arrived,’ he said. ‘It is the Lord’s will that I reveal new secrets, and that I make clear to the world the danger in which the bark of St. Peter is placed, by reason of your long neglect. The Church is full of abominations from the crown of the head to the soles of the feet, and not only do you fail to apply any remedy, but you worship the very source

* Francesco del Pugliese was deputed to write to England; a friend of Savonarola in Ferrara undertook to write to the King of Hungary; Giovanni di Niccolò Cambi to Germany. The draft of these letters was drawn up by Friar Niccolò da Milano, who for three years had acted as Savonarola’s secretary. We would here observe that on comparing the letter of del Nero with that of Mazzinghi, the first will be found very modest; but Mazzinghi (as he himself admitted in his deposition) was not content to follow the draft he had received, but was anxious to add many things in praise of Savonarola.

† Some one has tried to throw doubt upon the indisputable authenticity of these letters; but they are mentioned in the depositions of the accomplices; they are spoken of in the examinations of Savonarola; Frà Benedetto speaks of them in the third part of his *Vulnera Diligentis*, and many writers besides.

of the evils by which it is contaminated. Consequently, the Lord is highly incensed, and for some time has left the Church without a shepherd.' 'I now bear witness to 'you *in verbo Domini*, that this Alexander is not Pope, 'and can never be retained as such; therefore, setting 'aside his most wicked sin of simony, by which he 'bought the Papal throne, and daily sells benefices to 'the highest bidder; and, setting aside his other flagrant vices, I affirm that he is not a Christian, that he has 'no belief in a God, thus surpassing the utmost height 'of all infidelity.' After this preamble, he invited all Christian princes to assemble a Council as soon as possible, in some appropriate and free place. He bound himself to demonstrate all that he had said, and not by reasoning only; for he also promised that God would make the truth manifest by miraculous signs. To each of the princes he added a few words specially calculated to move the prince according to his particular disposition. Thus, in addressing the vain Emperor Maximilian, he reminded him of the majesty of the empire, to which no greater dignity could accrue than that of rescuing the Church from its perilous position. To Ferdinand and Isabella he said, 'Of what value are your victories over the infidels? You direct your attention to the outside of the edifice, while the foundation of the Church is shattered, and the interior is falling into ruin.' He called to the recollection of Charles VIII. the things already so often repeated to him: 'You cannot surely have forgotten the many ways of doing good that the Lord has laid open to you; therefore, if you abandon the undertaking, your punishment will be greater than that of all others. Bear in mind that you have already had one sign of the anger of God.* Will you, who bear the name of most Christian king, whom

* The death of his son.

God has chosen, to whom God has entrusted his avenging sword, will you, I say, consent to the ruin of the Church? Perhaps you are not aware in what and in how great perils it is at this moment placed.*

There is no doubt that Savonarola rested his principal expectations on Charles; he knew that that king had always been disposed to approve of the calling of a Council and to the reformation of the Church, and especially now that his mind had been directed to Italy and to religious matters;† he knew also how he was goaded on by the French clergy, and by the ungovernable rage of the cardinal of San Pietro in Vincola. The first step being taken, he had every reason to believe that the whole of Christendom would come to his aid. All were heartily tired of the abominations at Rome; he perceived that France was ready to move; that Germany was in a ferment, and that England seemed favourable; so that encouragements presented themselves from every quarter.‡

But in the life of individuals, as in the history of nations, an hour arrives when an unexpected turn is given to the whole course of events; an unseen and irresistible hand

* These letters were published in part by Baluzio, and in part by Meyer; the latter, however, by not having sufficiently examined the depositions of the witnesses, committed a great mistake in fixing the dates. The letters to the kings of Hungary and of England have disappeared.

† This is confirmed by Comines, who describes minutely the state of mind of King Charles at that time. 'Si avoit son cœur de faire et accomplir le retour en Italie, et confessoit bien y avoir fait des fautes largement et les comptoit. . . .' He says that the Pope wrote continually to the King, and that he sent to him 'quelque messenger secret, que je conduisis en la chambre du roy notre sire. . . .' But the King 'avoit mis de nouveau son imagination de vouloir vivre selon les commandements de Dieu, et mettre la justice en bon ordre et l'Eglise.' He had set his whole heart on reforming the abuses of the church, 'but,' Comines observes, 'il eust eu bien à faire, à ranger ces gens d'Eglise.' Liv. viii. chap. xviii.

‡ Padre Marchese supposes that the Cardinal, when he accompanied the French army in their march through Florence, had visited Savonarola; in the examinations of the latter it is said, that 'San Pietro in Vincola had countenanced him in that, and that he knew it; for a certain

seems then to cause everything to take an adverse direction. This hour we cannot fail to see had arrived in the life of Savonarola. Almost all the letters to the Princes existed as yet only in the state of rough drafts ; * but that to King Charles had been already sent off, in order to ascertain more easily how the ground lay. Savonarola was waiting with the utmost anxiety for the answer, when the news arrived that the courier on his way to France had been robbed by assassins of The Moor : and thus, most unfortunately, the letter fell into his hands. † It may easily be imagined that he lost no time in forwarding it to the Pope, and with what rage his Holiness read it. Borgia was now in possession of a document which revealed the full extent of the Friar's audacity ; the potentates of Italy, one and all, were against the Friar, and Savonarola saw in a moment how he was threatened from every quarter. But events hurried on with such marvellous rapidity, that he had not yet been able to estimate the immensity of these unexpected dangers ; when new and more serious events occurred, which came upon him like a thunderbolt.

'Cristofano, who was in the service of the Count della Mirandola, came with a private letter to me, of the said S. Pietro in Vincola, and told me that another day would not elapse before a troop of cardinals would arrive in Florence to form a Council ; I however, taking him for a story-teller, paid no regard to it.'

* This is the reason why the letters were found in his desk without any date. Even that to the King of France was only a rough draft. Baluzio published, in his *Miscellanies*, letters to the King of Spain and the Emperor, translated into Italian by Friar Ignazio of Ferrara. Meyer republished these two, and the Latin original of that to the King of France ; Perrens also published that letter in Latin, conceiving that he had been the first to make it known. Those to the kings of England and of Hungary have been lost, but they doubtless repeated the same things.

† Frà Marco della Casa, Burlamacchi, Razzi, Barsanti, Padre Marchese.

CHAPTER VII.

THE ORDEAL OF FIRE.

ONE of those moments had arrived when the whole disposition of a people appears to undergo a change, as if by enchantment. The followers of Savonarola had either disappeared, or had kept themselves concealed; for the whole of Florence seemed to have become hostile to him. Messengers were continually going and coming between Rome and Milan; the city was full of the Duke's spies, who were busily engaged, and wrote from time to time to their master that some great change was about to take place, which would be brought about by the Signory itself.* In fact, Berlinghieri and Popoleschi the Gonfaloniere were doing everything in their power to effect a change of government.

A most extraordinary event most unexpectedly occurred, to which the attention of the whole public was directed. A Franciscan friar of Puglia, when preaching in the church of Santa Croce (the church of the Holy

* Paolo Somenzio of Cremona resided in Florence; Giovanni Trachedino was at Bologna, to whom many of the duke's agents looked up as a chief. In these same months of March and April Trachedino wrote long letters to the duke, telling him of many things the Arrabbiati were preparing against the Friar, and of the favourable disposition of the Signory towards them; constantly repeating that he had received information, 'that the minds of some of the principal persons who, up to that time, had directed the affairs of the city, were in a state of great agitation; and whether it was by the affair of the Friar, or by some other cause, within a few days there would be some commotion or tumult, by which the government of the state would take another form.' A very large collection of these letters exists in the Archives at Milan.

Cross in Florence) had begun and continued an attack upon Savonarola with exceeding violence, calling him a heretic, a schismatic, and a pretended prophet; and not content with that, he challenged him to pass through a fire to prove the truth of his doctrine. Similar challenges had been made on other occasions,* to which Savonarola had paid no more attention than they deserved, considering it beneath his dignity to make any reply. But chance would have it, that on the present occasion, Frà Domenico held himself to have been personally challenged; for in the course of the past year, being at Prato, he had held a dispute with that same friar upon the doctrines of Savonarola. He had then been challenged to a public discussion: but on the day appointed, the friar who had been the first to attack and to abuse his opponent, returned to Florence, pretending that he had been sent for by his superiors; but in truth because he had not courage to meet Domenico.

No sooner, however, was Domenico informed of the new defiance of the Franciscan than he published the three celebrated *Conclusions* of his master, declaring himself ready to maintain them by the ordeal of fire. Nor was he a man at all likely to draw back, and the matter had thus assumed a serious aspect before Savonarola was able to interfere and put a stop to the proceeding. But when the Franciscan saw that Domenico was in earnest, he tried to get off, saying that the dispute was with Savonarola, and that he was willing to pass through the fire with him, even although he believed that he should be burned, because he was desirous that such a propagator of scandals and obnoxious doctrine should be put to death: that as for Domenico he had nothing to say to him.† This un-

* We have already mentioned that by a preacher in the church of the Santo Spirito.

† Some have pretended that the challenge was given by Savonarola, which is entirely false. The history of this fiery ordeal has been mis-

fortunate event might have stopped here, for Savonarola reproved Domenico severely for his over-excessive zeal,* and the Franciscan would gladly have found some way of getting out of the scrape; but so soon as he saw that the contest was likely to be given up, his eagerness for it increased.

The Compagnacci had met at one of their usual banquets, and there, in their silken attire, and over a luxurious table and sparkling wines, they vowed to do all in their power to forward the fiery ordeal. 'For,' they said, 'if Savonarola enters the fire he is sure to be burned; and if he refuses, he will lose credit with his followers, and it will give us an opportunity of getting up a riot, when we may lay hold of him,' some of them adding that they would then be able to kill him.† They applied therefore to the Signory, whom they found not only ready to second their design, but even to take the direction of the disgraceful plot.‡

represented by all modern authors, and to a considerable degree by their predecessors. We believe that we are now placing it in its true light, availing ourselves of Burlamacchi, Barsanti, Pico, Nardi, Cambi, &c.; but chiefly of the second book of the *Vulnera Diligentis* of Frà Benedetto, and the fourth *Giornata* (Diary) of Lorenzo Violi. They were eye-witnesses of the facts, and therefore what they tell us is worthy of full credit. Their writings, together with other original documents, have enabled us to set this hitherto very obscure incident in the biography of the Friar in its true light.

* In the printed edition of his examinations, Savonarola says distinctly, that he had done all he could to restrain Frà Domenico.

† See Burlamacchi; also Cerretani, who gives a minute description of those banquets of the Compagnacci.

‡ That the ordeal by fire was desired and arranged by the Signory admits of no doubt, from what Violi and Frà Benedetto relates. The latter says:—'They wished by this contrivance to get Frà Hieronymo into a situation where he might easily be put to death by his enemies, before the end of the disputation, or at least before the miracle could be seen; while they would appear quite ignorant and innocent of the proceedings.' (*Vulnera Diligentis*, Lib. ii. c. 9). Violi says expressly that the Compagnacci, 'made an arrangement with the Franciscan friars, who out of mere envy were enemies of the Friar, that one of them, named Francesco di Puglia, should preach in opposition to the things said by Frà Hieronymus, and that he should be set up in Santa Croce, to preach publicly and say,' &c. (MS. Magliab. of 39 leaves.)

They ordered their notary to issue a copy of the disputed Conclusions,* and publicly invited those who wished to maintain and defend them by the ordeal of fire to come forward and sign it.

No human power could then restrain Domenico, who went instantly to sign. The next thing was to get the Franciscan to sign, but that was not an easy matter. He began by telling the Signory 'that he could not put himself in comparison with Frà Girolamo either in doctrine or goodness, still he would have passed with him through the fire, but as for Frà Domenico, he had nothing to do with him.'† They assured him that it would not be necessary for him to enter the fire, that the sole object was to have one of the Friars of St. Mark's burned, in order afterwards to subdue Savonarola; that if they were not able to carry their object, they would find some way or other of getting rid of the affair altogether.‡

* The conclusions were these (in Latin) —

The Church of God requires reform; it will be scourged and renovated.

Florence also, by a scourge, will be renovated and will prosper.

The infidels will be converted to Christ.

All these things will happen in our day. The excommunication lately issued against our reverend Father Friar Hieronymus is null. Those who disregard it do not sin.

† This is expressly said in the record of these deliberations of the Signory. *Deliberazioni*, 1497-8—(27 leaves) See also in the *Archivio delle Riformazioni*.

‡ Burlamacchi tells us of the following assurances made to the Minorite friars:—'And, in fact, a promise was given to them that under no circumstances would they be required to go into the fire. For a few days before, at a banquet in the Palazzo Pitti, where the chief enemies were met, it was settled that the Minorites should not go into the fire, and that all that would be required was, that they should come into the Piazza with the friars of St. Mark's; that Frà Domenico, whom they called the Fattoraccio (bad steward), should go alone into the fire.'—Violi says: 'They put up to it Frà Giuliano Rondinelli, a noble Florentine, a man of little judgement or prudence, whom our malignant Florentines were better able to work upon than on the aforesaid Pugliese, and got him to say that he would go into the fire with Frà Domenico. This was the snare and the refined treachery which these fraudulent men made use of, as I have told you above, to bring over one of their friars to their purpose, by deception and fraud, and make him do that which he did not wish. The Compagnacci, and Doffo Spini, their leader, assured him that the fiery ordeal would not take

These assurances were made to him both by the Compagnacci and the Signory, but they could not obtain more from the Franciscan than to get him to sign a declaration that he would go into the fire with Frà Girolamo, if he would submit to the ordeal, adding expressly that he did so *at the suggestion and request* of the Magnificent Signory.* As to the ordeal with Frà Domenico, he proposed to substitute for himself his conventual brother Giuliano Rondinelli. After that, the declaration was subscribed by Frà Mariano degli Ughi of St. Mark's. Then came Rondinelli, who, without any backwardness, allowed himself to be prevailed upon, and he affixed his signature on the 30th of March, binding himself 'to go into the fire with Frà Domenico, although he should be burned; as he did it for the salvation of souls.' This miserable friar was a blind tool of the enraged Compagnacci and of the cunning Pugliese. Nor did the

'place, that no such proof would have to be submitted to, that no kind of injury would befall their friar and that they would contrive so many disputes and cavils that the ordeal would never take place; that all that was wanted was, that Frà Rondinelli would say that he was willing to go into the fire, but that, in reality, he would not have to do it.' (MS. of Violi, as above).

* 'Ad instantiam et requisitiones Dominorum Florentinorum.' It is thus written in the instrument of the Signory itself, which Meyer published from the *Archivio delle Riformagioni*, and which had been published even in the time of Savonarola. Padre Marchese (Doc. xxiv.) gives a copy of it with some variations, which the Dieci had sent to Rome. The signature of the Franciscan is alike in both.

With regard to the arguments made use of to persuade the Franciscan, they may be seen both in Frà Benedetto and in Violi. The latter relates further, that Doffo Spini was in the habit of meeting with large numbers of men out of work in the shop of Sandro Botticelli, and 'these talking together several times about putting the Friar to death, Doffo told them that it never was their intention that the Franciscan friar should go into the fire, and that he would be assured of this; that all that was required was, that he would continue to affirm his resolution so as to prolong the proceedings, as their object was to get rid of the pretensions of the Friar.' This Violi had read in a journal of Sandro Botticelli, which has since been lost. Frà Benedetto, as we have seen, has also affirmed in his narrative, that the plan was to kill Savonarola. Pico supposes that the first instigations came from Rome; and there certainly was at that time a thorough understanding between the Arrabbiati and the Pope.

Signory show any sign of shame in entering into such base plots, which were a disgrace to the dignity of their office, and could have no other result than the shedding of innocent blood, and placing the safety of the Republic itself in serious jeopardy.

There were not wanting some who openly disapproved of their conduct in a meeting held on the 30th of March, when the majority were of the opinion of Carlo Canigiani, who said: 'This is an affair of priests, and ought rather to be discussed at Rome, where saints are canonized, that in our Palazzo, where a discussion on war and finance would be more appropriate. But if this ordeal is at all events to take place, let us at least consider whether it will put an end to the discussions or not.' To this Girolamo Rucellai added, 'It appears to me that far too much is made of this fire; the important thing to do is to get rid of Frate and non-Frate, of Arrabbiato and non-Arrabbiato, and let us for once think of the peace of the city. But if it is believed that this ordeal will have the effect of tranquillising the city, let us go not into fire only, but into water, air, and earth; let us think of the city, and not on friars.' Then Giovanni Canacci rose, and, much agitated and almost with tears in his eyes, he spoke as follows:—'When 'I reflect on the present state of things, I know not 'whether life or death is most to be desired. Certain 'it is, that if our forefathers, the founders of this city 'of ours, could have foreseen that such things could 'take place, and that we should have brought ourselves 'to be the sport and the contempt of the whole world, 'they would have disdained to have had anything to do 'with it. Our city has fallen into such a condition as 'has not been witnessed for many years; the people 'never cease murmuring, and I therefore beseech your 'excellencies that by some mode or other you will 'relieve them from this state of misery, whether by

‘ fire, water, or by any other means. I would again pray
‘ you to put a stop to this affair, that neither misery nor
‘ disaster to this city may follow from it.’* Lastly,
Vespucci expressed this time strong disapprobation of
the conduct of the Signory, reproving them for not seeing
that the deeds they were supporting were those of
a depraved profligate class, giving free scope to the
wicked part of the population.†

Language so frank and unusual sufficiently proves
the great excitement that must have existed in the
meeting, and how indignant earnest-minded men
were at the proceedings of the Signory. The ordeal
by fire was now, however, inevitable. The Pope,
the Arrabbiati, and the Signory itself, were all eager
for it. As for Savonarola, he was most indignant
against his adversaries, who were indulging their party
spleen under the mask of religious zeal. He was per-
suaded that the Minorites had not the courage to venture
upon the ordeal; and he knew that they were only
instigated by the Arrabbiati. For these reasons he
did all he could to prevent the ordeal taking place;
but the feeling in his own mind was, that if it did
take place, there could be no doubt as to the result of
it. He secretly reasoned with himself thus—If Frà
Domenico urges on the ordeal with so much courage,

* We have given the meaning only of the other speeches, but what
Canacci said we have copied literally from the report of the meeting
(*Frammenti di Pratiche* as quoted above.) This speech of Canacci is
thus strangely transformed by Nerli (*Commentary*, lib. iv.) ‘ Would it
‘ not have been enough for the two friars, to prevent their being in
‘ danger of being burnt in the fire, to have had them put into a tub
‘ of water, which might also have been tepid, to avoid their being in
‘ any way injured, and if they came out of it quite dry, they would
‘ have produced a supernatural miracle.’ This pleasantry has been
often repeated, but Canacci was moved by the danger in which he
saw his country was about to be involved, and was more disposed to
weep than to make jests.

† His speech is the last reported, and it is so fragmentary as to be
made out with difficulty.

he must certainly be inspired by God. According to his ideas, it would in no way be extraordinary or difficult that the Lord might choose, by means of a miracle, to confound the Arrabbiati, and prove the truth of his doctrine.* The people had heard him many times say that one day his predictions would be confirmed by supernatural signs.† The moment seemed now to have arrived, and all were therefore intensely eager to witness the trial. The Piagnoni themselves were more eager for it than all the rest; for they believed that their master would be unable to restrain himself from entering the fire, and would perform the miracle.

Such was the reasoning that prevailed in Florence;‡ and Savonarola, while he disapproved of, and did all in his power to prevent the trial, was inwardly gratified by the boldness shown by Domenico, and by seeing that everything was fatally contributing to render it necessary. To other things which concurred were added visions of Frà Salvestro, who declared that he had seen the angels of Frà Girolamo and Frà Domenico, who had assured him that both would come out of the fire uninjured.§ We know that Savonarola had great faith in the visions of his companion. Things had arrived at such a pass that all the friars of St. Mark's, and in the Dominican convent at Fiesole, offered to pass through the fire; and Savonarola, thus urged on from

* Burlamacchi. See also the contract with the signatures, and the discourse of Savonarola, that will be mentioned hereafter.

† He said this also in his letter to the Princes.

‡ In the old Medicean Archives (packet 69) are some letters of Leonardo Strozzi to Piovano di Cascina, fragments of which were published by Perrens (vol. i. Appendix, p. 492). In one of them, dated April 5, it is said, 'I know that many stories are about, and you wish to know something about them; as to the affairs of the Friar, little else is talked of.'

§ This fact is confirmed by the statements in the examinations of Savonarola and of Frà Domenico.

every side, sent their subscriptions to the Signory, declaring that he would select one from his own convent for every Minorite who would come forward; and that, if the ordeal should ever take place, he was certain that the issue of it would be in favour of his followers.*

On the 1st of April he delivered a short discourse in St. Mark's, which was continually interrupted by cries from the people urging him to let them go into the fire; to which he replied, 'I have too many great works on my hands to condescend to lose my time in these miserable contests: but if our adversaries will bind themselves publicly to refer the decision of our cause and the reform of the Church to that ordeal, I shall then never hesitate to pass through the fire, certain that I shall come out of it unhurt. But if they desire that the validity of the excommunication shall be proved by that trial, let them first answer the reasons I have brought forward against it. They wish perhaps to refute our prophecies by this fire. We do not oblige, nor do we exhort anyone to believe more of them than they feel disposed; but this we advise, that men should live virtuously, and in that way we wish for an ordeal of charity, and a miracle of faith; all besides is valueless.'

'Our enemies, the promoters of this thing, say that they are willing to die, and in that they confess to the commission of suicide. We, on the contrary, are called upon and constrained to meet death, because the honour of God and of faith have been compromised. They who truly feel themselves inspired by the Lord will certainly come out from the flames unhurt, should the trial take place, of which we are not yet certain. As for me, I reserve myself for a still greater work, for which I shall ever be ready to offer up my life. The time will come when the Lord will show supernatural signs, but

* See Burlamacchi, and the work quoted.

that will certainly not be left to the choice and will of anyone. For the present it suffices for us to see, that if we send anyone of our brethren indiscriminately, we shall expose ourselves to the anger of the people, should the Lord not bring him out unhurt from the flames.' *

Meanwhile, it appeared more and more necessary that the trial should take place, and the enthusiasm of Frà Domenico† began to persuade the most diffident that not Savonarola only, but that he, Domenico, was one of the elect of God for this work. Hence people's minds were excited to an incredible degree, and Piagnoni and Arrabbiati, for very different reasons, waited for the day with equal anxiety; men, women and children went to offer themselves; and if many did so from mere display, there were others who came forward in all sincerity. On the 2nd of April Frà Malatesta Sacramoro and Frà Roberto Salviati, of St. Mark's, desired to subscribe, saying that they felt themselves called upon by God for this work. And then, for the sake of greater publicity, the contract was reprinted with all the signatures of the two parties.‡ The Dieci, who had always been friendly to Savonarola, sent to Rome a minute and exact account of what had taken place, enclosing two letters from the friars of St. Mark's, in which they set forth their reasons for accepting the challenge.§

* *Reply to certain Objections regarding the Ordeal of Fire.* This discourse was published in Savonarola's lifetime, together with the contract and the signatures of those who had offered to pass through the fire. See also Frà Benedetto and Violi.

† See the examinations of Frà Domenico.

‡ In this way the publication must have appeared in two different forms. The letter of Leonardo Strozzi al Piovanno di Cascina of April 5, above referred to, confirms it, for it says: 'The same *conclusions* appeared to-day, newly printed, with the additions of the subscriptions of those friars,' &c.

§ See the letter of the Dieci among the documents published by Padre Marchese, doc. xxiv.

The 6th of April was the day fixed upon for this extraordinary combat; Frà Domenico and Frà Giuliano Rondinelli were the champions selected by common agreement. The convent of St. Mark's had been closed for several days, and the friars were absorbed in continual prayer. On the evening of the 5th, however, a notice was received from the Signory that the ordeal was put off to the 7th. The reason for the change remains unknown; some asserted that the Signory were waiting for a brief from Rome, prohibiting the trial,* as the Pope wished to be able to postpone it according to his discretion, being afraid that he had already pushed matters too far, not expecting to find so much resolution in St. Mark's, and so much timidity in the Minorites, who had already been asking to be assured that they should some way or other get off from their engagement.

Next day a fresh deliberation was held in the Palazzo, to alter the resolution come to on the 30th of March, when it was agreed, 'that in the event of Frà Domenico being burned, it should be intimated to Frà Girolamo that in three hours he must quit the Florentine territory;† and as to the Minorite friars, a promise was made that in any case they should be able to place themselves in safety. On the same day Savonarola delivered a short discourse, recommending all the faithful to be fervent in prayer.

* A letter of Strozzi to Piovano di Cascina, of April 6, states, 'I believe that it is either a brief expected from Rome or some other impediment; their (the friars of St. Mark's) part is all prepared: and if it takes place, which I now think it will not, the preparation would not be a less striking event than the miracle itself.' He says further, that in a discourse Savonarola had assured them that the miracle could never be performed by incantation, and that even if the trial should not take place, other supernatural signs were not far off. See this letter in Perrens; the same statements occur in Burlamacchi, p. 123.

† *Deliberazioni dei Signori*, as above, and entitled, *Contra fratrem Hieronymum*.

The 7th of April arrived without any brief having come from Rome,* and the city was all impatience to see the new spectacle, which nothing seemed now likely to prevent. All was prepared, and everyone hoped to see it terminate according to his particular view; the Compagnacci and Arrabbiati hoped to find an opportunity of killing the Friar, the Minorites were occupied in contriving how they might escape from all danger, and the Signory encouraged everything that would prove injurious to Savonarola. Both parties decided upon coming to the Piazza under an armed escort, in order that, in the event of a riot, each might secure his own safety.† Francesco Gualterotti and Giovan Battista Ridolfi were charged to preserve order in the St. Mark's party, and Daniello Alberti and Tommaso Antinori in that of the Minorite Friars.‡ As Savonarola had doubts of the fidelity of his opponents, he sent that same morning to Francesco Davanzati, at the Palazzo, to request the Dieci, who continued faithful to him, to provide that no one might draw back and leave his companion alone in the flames. He desired, therefore, that the fire might be applied to the pile on one side, that the friars should enter from the opposite side, and that the pile should be immediately set on fire behind them.§ He further desired that the trial should take place before the dinner-hour, that the minds of the friars might be free and clear.||

* It appears that the Pope did send a brief prohibiting the ordeal, but he purposely made it arrive too late.

† Burlamacchi, p. 130. 'For it was well known that the intention of the enemies was no other than to slay Father Frà Girolamo in the Piazza.' And Frà Benedetto (*Vulnera Diligentis*, lib. ii. cap. 9), says that 'they wished to create among the people some wild discord that would give rise to a riot, in which Frà Hieronymus and some others of the faithful might be slain by the opposite party.'

‡ Burlamacchi and Frà Benedetto.

§ See among the examinations and depositions of those implicated that of Francesco Davanzati.

|| Burlamacchi. Savonarola, in the discourse of which we shall speak

While all things were being prepared in the Piazza, Savonarola celebrated a solemn mass in St. Mark's, after which he made a short discourse to the assembled people, nor could he even in that last hour conceal his distrust. 'I cannot assure you that the trial will take place, because that does not depend on us; this, however, I can tell you, that when it does, the victory will certainly be ours. O Lord, we have no need of these miraculous proofs for our belief in the truth; but since we have been challenged we cannot shrink from sustaining Thy honour. We are certain that the devil could not promote this matter to the injury of Thy honour or contrary to Thy will, therefore we go forth to combat for Thee; but these our enemies worship another God, for their works are far different from ours. O Lord! this people wishes no other than to serve Thee. My people! is it your desire to serve God?' Upon which all cried with a loud voice, 'We do.'* He then recommended the male part of his audience to pray in the church, while he prepared the friars for going to the Piazza; and he recommended the females to continue without ceasing in prayer, until he should return from the ordeal.† At this moment the mace-bearers of the Signory arrived to announce that all was ready,‡ and immediately the friars of St. Mark's went forth in procession.

Frà Domenico, with his brethren Malatesta Sacramoro and Francesco Salviati on either side of him, wearing a bright red velvet cape and carrying a tall cross, advanced in the front, his head erect and his countenance serene;

hereafter, says: 'They wished the trial to be at the twentieth hour,¹ 'I said, No, because it is necessary that they should be composed.'

* *Exhortation to the people in St. Mark's, April 7, 1498.* It may be seen at the end of the sermons on Exodus.

† *Exhortation, &c.* Burlamacchi.

‡ Burlamacchi, Frà Benedetto.

¹ 2½ P.M. on April 7.—Tr.

Savonarola followed after him, in a white gown, holding the sacrament. All the rest of the friars, about two hundred, followed, singing with a deep tone, the psalm *Exurgat Deus et dissipentur inimici ejus*.* On arriving at the Piazza about the fifteenth hour (half-past 12),† they found the entrance to it barricaded and kept by armed men. They passed in, two and two, and no sooner did they mingle with the crowd than the people joined in their psalm, with voices loud enough to make the earth quake.‡ There was an immense multitude, as if the whole city were collected in the Piazza and in the surrounding houses; the windows, the balconies, the roofs were crammed; the more active were holding by the railings, clasping pillars and statues; some had climbed upon walls, and had been waiting there since the morning.

The Loggia de' Lanzi § was divided by a partition into two parts; that next to the Palazzo was assigned to the Minorite friars; the Dominicans occupied the other, in which a small altar had been set up. || Frà Domenico placed the sacrament upon it, and, kneeling down before it, engaged in prayer, his companions standing in silence around him. A body of 300 infantry had been stationed in front of the Loggia, under the command of Marcuccio Salviati, a brave officer, and most faithful to the convent of St. Mark's. Before the Tetto dei Pisani ¶ 500 Compagnacci, armed, under the

* Burlamacchi, Frà Benedetto, Violi.

† 'Let God arise, and let his enemies be scattered.'—Psalm xlviii. 1.—Tr.

‡ Nardi, *Storia di Firenze*. Although Violi says it was the 21st hour, we rather follow Nardi, who agrees with Burlamacchi, and with what Savonarola says in his discourse.

§ Burlamacchi, 130.

|| A celebrated portico still forming nearly one side of the Piazza.—Tr.

¶ Burlamacchi, Violi, Frà Benedetto. Violi says that the Minorites came to the Piazza after the Dominicans, but all the other writers describe them as having already arrived in the Loggia.

¶ A building then existing on the side of the Piazza facing the Palazzo; what remains of it is now the Post Office.

leadership of Doffo Spini, had posted themselves; and 500 of the infantry of the Signory, under the command of Giovacchino della Vecchia, were placed before the Palazzo; and, besides all these, soldiers were placed, according to custom, at the ends of the streets leading into the Piazza.* The thousand armed men, thus masters of the Piazza, were all prepared to offer any insult to Savonarola, who, with perfect serenity, contemplated the danger in which he was placed, and viewed the pile of combustible materials which had been prepared. This extraordinary apparatus extended about eighty feet across the Piazza, between the Marzocco† and the Casa Pisani. It was ten feet wide at the base, and five feet in height, and was covered with earth and bricks, upon which were heaps of faggots of wood sprinkled with gunpowder, oil, and resinous substances. In the middle of the pile there was a free passage, two feet wide, for the champions.‡ Nothing was now wanting but the friars to come forward and the pile to be kindled.

Up to this time Savonarola, by delays, and everything he could devise, had endeavoured to prevent the trial taking place; while, on the other hand, the Minorites had been urging and challenging it; but now that matters were come to the point, the two parties changed sides. Savonarola, excited by the multitude of spectators, the solemn hymn of the friars, the truly sublime enthusiasm of Frà Domenico—who, after he had risen from his prayers, showed great impatience to enter the fire§—had persuaded himself that the Lord sustained His

* See Burlamacchi and Violi for all these particulars, also Frà Benedetto, who is the most minute, and was an eye-witness of all.

† A celebrated bronze figure of a lion holding the shield of the city in front of the Palazzo; the origin of the name is unknown.—*Tr.*

‡ Burlamacchi, Violi, Frà Benedetto, Nardi, &c.

§ See the authors above quoted and the examination of Frà Domenico.

disciple, and therefore now wished that there should be no more delay. But neither Francesco di Puglia, who had given the challenge, nor Girolamo Rondinelli, who was to be one of the champions, had yet made their appearance in the Loggia; on the contrary, they were in the Palazzo in secret conference with the Signory. And the Signory, in place of coming down to the ringhiera to witness the solemn spectacle that in a few minutes was to be exhibited, were disputing among themselves, unable to come to any decision as to what they ought to do.* To such a pitch of effrontery had they arrived, that while all were waiting for the Minorite friar to come forward, and for the orders of the Signory, they sent to enquire why the Dominican had not begun! Upon this Frà Domenico grew angry; and Savonarola desired that they should be told that they must make haste, and not keep the people longer in their state of uneasiness.†

The Minorite friars now perceiving the scrape they had got into, began to make all sorts of pretences. They first desired Piero degli Alberti, who had been appointed to direct the ordeal, and who was a bitter enemy of Savonarola, to come forward and say that the red cope of Domenico might have been charmed by Savonarola, and that they therefore desired that it should be taken off. Frà Domenico and Savonarola replied that, to avoid any dispute, a contract had been signed; that they had no belief in incantations, and left it to their enemies to make use of them. But such was their importunity that Domenico gave way, and took off his cope. The Minorites then brought forward other excuses. They said that his gown might have been charmed; and Domenico, yielding even to that, said he was ready to change it for any dress of his

* All this is minutely related by Frà Benedetto.

† Ibidem.

companions. He was accordingly taken into the Palazzo, and, after having been completely stripped, had the dress of the Dominican Alessandro Strozzi put upon him.* When he returned to the Loggia, they would not allow him to stand near Savonarola, lest he should renew his incantations; and Domenico was content to remain among the Minorites.† His patience on that day was equal to his courage; his eager desire to go into the flames induced him to yield everything, so that he might the sooner undergo the ordeal.

But the champion on the other side was still with Francesco di Puglia in the Palazzo, and had not yet made his appearance.‡ Savonarola now became very impatient; and what raised his suspicion the more was a constant consultation going on between certain citizens and the Minorites, to whom they showed great favour in all their proceedings. The persons appointed to conduct the ordeal took their part, and admitted all their excuses. In order, therefore, to put an end to the uncertainty, Savonarola applied to the Signory. Just then the Minorites asked for another secret conference with the Signory. What took place we do not know; but it had become more and more manifest that the proposed ordeal was no other than a skilfully-contrived plot against Savonarola and the friars of St. Mark's.§

The patience of the crowd was now beginning to be exhausted, having been kept so many hours in the Piazza; most of them had fasted since the morning, and became enraged that they had been kept so long to no

* Burlamacchi and Violi relate that when Strozzi was called for he thought he was going to be required to go into the fire, was quite overjoyed, and asked Savonarola to bless him.

† Frà Benedetto, Burlamacchi, Violi.

‡ Frà Benedetto.

§ Frà Benedetto narrates these particulars with great minuteness, which are also mentioned, but more generally, by Burlamacchi and Violi.

purpose. Already on every side a deep murmur was heard, followed by a seditious cry, and the Arrabbiati, who had been waiting since the morning in expectation of that, were trying to take advantage of the excitement. A bravo, one of their servants, succeeded in getting up a riot, and in a moment the Piazza was in a tumult.* The entrances to the adjoining streets being closed, the people found themselves surrounded and hemmed in, so that they began to move towards the Palazzo. It appears that according to agreement, the Arrabbiati were to lay hold of Savonarola at this time and put him to death on the spot. The attempt was made, but Salviati kept his soldiers close before the Loggia, and drawing a line on the ground with his sword, he called out, 'Whoever passes this line will find what the weapon of Marcuccio Salviati can do;' and this in so determined a tone of voice that no one had the courage to come forward.† At the same time the mercenary troops of the Signory advanced, not knowing what the sudden tumult meant; but seeing the people running towards the Palazzo, they firmly beat them back.‡

When calm was thus restored, the crowd being reassured, were more eager than ever to witness the trial; and the Signory were more and more perplexed. A heavy rain fell, with thunder and lightning, which seemed as if it must put an end to the whole affair; but so eager were the people for the expected spectacle,

* Burlamacchi, Frà Benedetto.

† Ibidem.

‡ Ibidem. The following words of Frà Benedetto, in the work above quoted, are remarkable. 'But be this great secret known to you, that a few days after the attempted ordeal, several persons went to the spiritual superior of the city of Florence to obtain absolution; for they had intended to lay violent hands on the prophet, on the day of the ordeal, and put him to death. And if you wish for any more certain information, go and ask Bartolommeo Redditi, who is still alive, to whom this was told by the superior himself, and he has borne testimony to it, and does continually bear true witness.'

that they continued immovable, and the rain ceased as unexpectedly as it had begun; but there was still the same uncertainty as to what was to happen. Nor had the Minorite Friar yet come forth, his companions starting fresh objections. They required that Domenico should lay aside the crucifix he held in his hand, which he immediately did, saying that he intended to enter the fire holding the sacrament. Here a new and more violent dispute arose, the Minorite declaring that he wished to burn the consecrated host. Domenico then began to lose all patience and would not yield, maintaining, together with Savonarola, that at all events the accidental accompaniments would alone be burned, that the substance of the Sacrament would be untouched; and in support of this they quoted many doctors.* The enemy thus meeting with resistance for the first time, directed their attack against Savonarola, not knowing what to resort to in order to gain time. While they were thus disputing, the Signory took advantage of it, and issued an order that the ordeal should not take place.†

The indignation of the assembled people was indescribable, and no one knew on whom they ought to take vengeance; but the greater number at length charged Savonarola with their disappointment; and even the Piagnoni went about saying that he himself ought to have gone alone into the fire, and so have given an indisputable proof of his supernatural power. The Arrabbiati and the Signory proclaimed on all sides

* Burlamacchi, Violi, Frà Benedetto. Domenico says in his deposition that he did not wish to give way on this point, because Frà Silvestro had seen their angels, who had directed that he should be told to go into the fire with the sacrament.

† Nardi says that it was the rain which put a stop to the ordeal, and that has been repeated by many; but Burlamacchi, Violi, and Frà Benedetto place it beyond all doubt that it was by an express order of the Signory.

that now the imposture of Savonarola had been exposed, that he was afraid to enter the fire, and similar falsehoods; whilst the Minorites went about with the greatest effrontery shouting victory, although their champion was concealed in the Palazzo, not having had even the courage to look upon the prepared apparatus.* Thus the whole city was filled with cries against the Friar of St. Mark's. It was with the utmost difficulty that the Dominicans got back in safety to their convent, escorted by the soldiers of Marcuccio Salviati, who with a few of the bravest of his men kept close round Savonarola and Domenico, defending them with much courage, sword in hand, from the insults of an infuriated mob, who were urged on by the Compagnacci.†

When at length they got into the church, Savonarola found the women still in the act of prayer. He ascended the pulpit, and gave a short account of what had taken place, while the furious cries of the populace resounded from the adjoining piazza.‡ When his audience was dismissed, he shut himself up in his cell, with a mind oppressed by a load of grief which neither speech nor writing could describe.

The Minorites were triumphant, and the Signory awarded to them an annual pension of sixty lire for twenty years, *as a reward for the services they had rendered.*§ On the first occasion of their sending for the money, the manager of the bank was so indignant that on paying it he said—'There, take the price of blood you have betrayed!' Two briefs were immediately

* 'He put on the face of a harlot, for without the least sense of shame he went about saying that victory was theirs, and he wrote many letters to the same effect.' Fra Benedetto, *Vulnera Diligentis*, lib. ii. cap. 7. See also Violi and Burlamacchi.

† Burlamacchi, Frà Benedetto.

‡ Ibidem.

§ Burlamacchi. This fact is stated in a great number of manuscripts, in which the discussion which took place is also reported, and it was published by Perrens.

received from Rome, dated the 12th of April—one to the Minorite friars, ‘praising the holy zeal and the evangelical charity shown in a work which the Holy Father will keep in eternal remembrance’—the other to Francesco di Puglia, whom the Pope most warmly congratulated, recommending him in his own name, and in that of the cardinals, ‘to persevere in so good and pious a work until the whole evil should be extirpated.’ *

* These briefs were published by Quetif.

CHAPTER VIII.

ATTACK AND DEFENCE OF THE CONVENT OF ST. MARK'S—SAVONAROLA
AND HIS TWO COMPANIONS ARE LED TO PRISON.

THE ordeal by fire, or rather the plot contrived for that day by the Arrabbiati, had its desired effect. The whole city appeared to have become hostile to Savonarola and his convent; the populace could not forgive them that, even without the Franciscans, they did not pass through the fire, in order, by the miracle, to silence their enemies for ever. The Piagnoni did not enter into all the Friar's subtle reasonings about the time not being opportune, nor about tempting the Lord, nor about the good or bad faith of the adversaries, but rather began, for the first time, to have doubts of his supernatural power, and to lend a willing ear to the stories and calumnies of the Arrabbiati. That party now exhibited an incredible activity; and were in continual communication with the Signory and the canons of the Duomo. It was clear that some new and decisive blow was pending. At the same time, the followers of the Friar who might have discovered the plots of the enemy, and have rendered them abortive, were too weak, both in number and influence, to offer any effective resistance. They were everywhere insulted with the names of hypocrites and impostors, and they could hardly appear in the streets without danger.*

* Nardi, p. 149; Burlamacchi, &c.

In this state of things, some of the popular party, seeing the premonitory symptoms of a great tempest, united together, and proposed to have recourse to arms, and take the advantage of being the first to attack the enemy. But the most faithful disciples of Savonarola, and chiefly Francesco Valori, were strongly opposed to such a course, saying that they ought not to be the first to shed the blood of citizens, and stain their hands in such a conflict. Their opinion prevailed, but many were very angry; so much so, that Luca degli Albizzi, one of the most eager to come to blows, left Florence, saying—‘That as it was no longer a question of active resistance, everyone had a right to look to his individual safety.’

The morning of the 8th of April, Palm Sunday, passed off quietly; but a watchful eye might have clearly discerned that quiet gloom which forebodes a storm, and might have considered it fortunate if something new did not occur. Savonarola delivered a short and melancholy sermon in St. Mark's, in which he offered up himself as a sacrifice to God; declaring that he was ready to suffer death for the good of his flock. He bade a mournful adieu to the people; and, in giving them his blessing, appeared to be conscious that he was addressing them for the last time.*

The Piagnoni went to St. Mark's that evening to be present at vespers, and afterwards to the Duomo, where there was to be a sermon by Frà Mariano degli Ughi; the same who, with Frà Malatesta and Frà Domenico had offered to submit to the ordeal. On their way they were several times attacked with showers of stones, and encountered groups of Arrabbiati, who, full of audacity, seemed to say, ‘At last we have the upper hand.’ They

* Nardi, p. 120. On this the author remarks: ‘This man was ever true to himself; he was never intimidated by any trouble or danger.’

saw one of these groups throwing stones at the windows of Andrea Cambini, a follower of Savonarola. On arriving at the Duomo, they found all the benches already occupied; many of the Compagnacci had collected before the door, insulting everyone going into the church, telling them that there should be no sermon. The other party answered that a sermon would certainly be delivered one way or another; and thus they went on contending, until at last the Compagnacci, drawing their swords, from words came to deeds. They attacked one Lando Sassolini; and although they did not wound him, the violence of their proceedings was enough to cause a riot through the city.* The Piagnoni ran to their houses for arms; some of the Compagnacci got possession of the corners of the streets; while others ran about the city, calling out—‘*To St. Mark’s! to St. Mark’s! set it on fire!*’ They collected in the Piazza; and, as soon as they were in sufficient number, they moved on with arms in their hands, and with furious shouts, towards St. Mark’s. They overtook a person named Pecori, walking quietly to the Church of the Annunziata, chaunting a psalm, and, falling upon him, said—‘This fellow still dares to mutter his hypocrisy’—and, following him to the steps of the Innocenti,† slew him. A poor spectacle-maker, hearing the noise in the street, came out with his slippers in his hand; and while trying, by entreaties, to pacify the people, was struck dead by a blow of a sword on his head.‡ The same thing happened to others; and in this state of excitement by the sight of blood, the mob of Arrabbiati reached the piazza of St. Mark. They found the church full of people, who had been attending vespers, and were still engaged in prayer; and they attacked them

* Giovanni Cambi, *Storie*; in the *Erud. Toscani*, vol. xxii. p. 119.

† The foundling hospital adjoining the church of the Annunziata.

‡ Burlamacchi, p. 136.

with a volley of stones. The terror was general; the walls echoed the shrieks of the women, and all took to flight. In a moment the church was emptied; and its doors, as well as those of the convent, were closed and barred, none of the citizens remaining inside, except a few who wished to defend the place. *

These did not amount to more than thirty,† but they were among the warmest of the supporters of Savonarola, the same who had accompanied him when he went to preach in the Duomo, and who were always ready to risk their lives for him. They had seen for several days that the convent was in danger, and eight or ten of them had kept watch all night. On the recommendation of Frà Salvestro and Frà Francesco de' Medici, who gave that advice unknown to Savonarola and Frà Domenico (who, they knew, would have disapproved of it), they had secretly brought in a quantity of arms, and concealed them in a small room in the cloister. There were about a dozen cuirasses, and as many helmets, eighteen halberts, five or six cross-bows, four or five hand-guns, shields, a barrel of gunpowder, and one full of lead bullets,‡ and there appear to have been besides two small mortars.§

* Burlamacchi; Fra Benedetto, *Cedrus Libani*: the attack on the convent is minutely described in this small poem, of which we have spoken elsewhere. An account of all these events is also to be found in the examinations of the parties accused.

† These facts are minutely described by Burlamacchi and Frà Benedetto, but with great exaggeration of the numbers, and it was therefore necessary for us to look into the examinations of the persons accused, and into that of Frà Domenico.

‡ Frà Domenico, in his most trustworthy confession, says, that except these few arms, which had been collected for the escort of Savonarola, he did not know of any others in the convent, nor did he think at all about them; 'those arms,' he said, 'I know for certain were brought in without the order or knowledge of Savonarola, and without my consent; he always laughed at such things.' This is confirmed by the depositions of the other accused persons.

§ Mention is made of these small mortars in the examinations of Lionello Boni and Bartolommeo Mei: the first of whom says that he had heard something about them; the latter that he had seen them. Some modern writers having found frequent mention of artillery in old

Francesco Davanzati had procured almost the whole of these defences, which were distributed to those who knew best how to use them. He, together with Baldo Inghirami, had the chief direction of the defence, placing guards at the weakest parts, and issuing the proper orders.* About sixteen of the friars† were armed, the chief of whom was Luca d' Andrea della Robbia‡ and our Frà Benedetto.§ It was a curious sight to see one of these friars with a helmet on his head, a cuirass over his Dominican gown, and a long halbert in his hand, hastening through the cloister crying *Viva Cristo!* and calling to arms.

Savonarola was much grieved by all this, and Frà Domenico went about recommending all to lay down their arms.|| He prayed them 'not to stain their hands with blood, nor to act contrary to the precepts of the Gospel and the will of their superior.' But all was in vain, the furious cries in the Piazza became stronger, and the thundering at the doors louder and louder. It was then that Savonarola thought of preventing a lamentable and useless shedding of blood by the sacrifice of himself; so putting on his cope, and taking a crucifix in his hand, he said, 'Let me go, for this tempest has arisen on my account;' and he then proposed to give himself up to the enemy.¶ An universal lamentation

authors, have taken for granted that there must have been cannons in St. Mark's. But that is one of the many exaggerations we meet with about Savonarola. The word artillery was then applied to any kind of fire-arms, and with the exception of four or five muskets, no *artillery* was made use of in St. Mark's; the mortars, even if they were there, were useless.

* Examination of Niccolò Calzaiuolo.

† This does not appear quite clear from the depositions of the friars, but it is so from those of others.

‡ See his examination. This was a different person from that other Luca d'Andrea della Robbia of whom Frà Domenico speaks. He was a soldier and fought bravely.

§ *Cedrus Libani*, &c.

|| Examination of Frà Domenico.

¶ Burlamacchi, p. 136. Examination of Frà Salvestro: the declara-

arose among the bystanders; friars and seculars pressed around him, weeping and calling out, 'No, do not forsake us; you will be torn in pieces, and what shall we do without you?' When he saw that his most faithful friends urged him to desist, he turned round and desired that all should follow him. He first led a procession through the cloisters, having the Sacrament in his hand, and then proceeding to the choir, told his brethren that prayer ought to be the sole arms of religious men; upon which they all knelt down before the Sacrament, and sang—*Salvum fac populum tuum, Domine*.^{*} Some laid their arms against the wall; others retained them; and a few went to keep guard at the most important places.

It was about the twenty-second hour (a quarter past four, P.M.); the crowd in the Piazza had much increased; the absence of all resistance gave courage to the assailants; and the Signory, adding a new outrage, sent their own guards to assist them. Soon after, their mace-bearers came, who, with a loud voice, made proclamation of a decree of the Signory, ordering everyone in the convent immediately to lay down his arms; and declaring that Savonarola was banished, and was required to quit the Florentine territory within twelve hours. The greater number of those who heard the proclamation believed it to be a device of the enemy;† for it was not to be believed that the Signory would call upon men to lay down their arms, who with difficulty were defending themselves, while they gave full liberty to the assailants,

tion of that friar is deserving of much weight, for in his examination he endeavoured to blacken the memory of Savonarola. See also the examination of Alessandro Pucci.

^{*} 'Save thy people and bless thine inheritance, feed them also, and lift them up for ever.'—Psalm xxviii. 9.—TR.

† Frà Domenico says that to the last he could not bring himself to believe that the Signory would really encourage the enemies of St. Mark's.

who were the sole cause of the riot, and who were not only infinitely more numerous, but to whom they had even sent assistance. Nevertheless, the order had the effect of making some ask for a safe conduct and depart.

Among those who, in this difficult and perilous state of things, left the convent, was Francesco Valori, who let himself down from a back wall, although Francesco Davanzati and others strongly dissuaded him, on account of the danger. Finding that scarcely a feeble resistance was made within the convent, whilst the enemy without were hourly increasing in number and force, he was desirous of getting to his own house, in order to collect his adherents and make a more energetic defence from without. But his dwelling place was suddenly surrounded by a great number of persons, and a mace-bearer arrived with an order from the Signory requiring him to appear immediately before them. He showed every desire to obey, feeling sure that he should be able, by his presence and authority, to make them ashamed of their conduct; he, therefore, set out immediately with the mace-bearer for the Palazzo. He passed through the crowd with a lofty air and a serene countenance, like a man confident in his innocence, and who had never flinched before any danger. But they had scarcely reached the Church of St. Procolo when they were met by some members of the Ridolfi and Tornabuoni families, relations of those whom, in the preceding August, he had been the cause of their being condemned to death, and they at once attacked and killed him. In this way a public injury met reparation by private revenge; and thus a valiant and honest citizen, who had always been the most powerful friend of Savonarola, perished miserably. His wife, hearing the noise, ran to the window in terror, and in the midst of the confusion and frightful cries of her husband and his murderers, a shot from a cross-bow from the crowd sent her to be

again united with him in a better world. The mad-dened populace immediately entered, sacked, and set fire to the house; and while they were carrying off the furniture of a bed, a baby that was asleep in it, a grandson of Valori, was suffocated. The Signory neither then nor afterwards made any enquiry into those murders and outrages.* On the same day the house of Andrea Cambini was sacked and burned, and those of Paolo Antonio Soderini and Gio. Battista Ridolfi were only saved from the fury of the mob by the presence of several friends and of some of the mace-bearers of the Signory.†

Evening was now near, and the fury of the assailants of the convent had much increased. Some set fire to the doors while others succeeded in scaling the walls on the side next the Via del Maglio, and thus got into the cloisters. These men sacked the infirmary and some of the cells, and, collecting together, entered the sacristy with arms in their hands, and from thence, by breaking open the doors, got into the choir. When the friars, who were there on their knees and engaged in prayer, saw themselves thus unexpectedly attacked, they rose up by a natural impulse of self-defence, and some with lighted tapers, others with wooden and brazen crucifixes, began to strike at the faces of their assailants; who, believing themselves to be attacked by a company of angels, precipitately took to flight.‡ Upon this those who, on being required by Savonarola, had laid down their arms, again took them up, and then fresh encounters took place in all the cloisters. At the same

* This fact is minutely related by Burlamacchi, Nardi, and all the contemporary writers. See also the letters of the Signory in Padre Marchese, Doc. xxv. and xxix.

† Ibidem.

‡ Burlamacchi and the other biographers, as well as almost all the accused who were examined, mention this fact; Frà Benedetto, in his poem of *Cedrus Libani*, calls it a divine miracle.

time, the great bell of the convent, called *la Piagnona*, was tolled; both the assault and the defence were vigorously prosecuted, and on every side were heard the cries of desperation, the clang of arms, and the sounds of tumult. Here Baldo Inghirlami and Francesco Davanzati led on their followers; there Andrea di Luca della Robbia, sword in hand, pursued the enemy in the cloisters; and now Frà Benedetto, who with some of his companions had got upon the roof, sent down a shower of stones and tiles which made the enemy retreat. In the interior of the church more than one made use of his hand-gun, among whom was one Enrico, a German, a fair and handsome youth, who that day gave proofs of the greatest valour. From the beginning of the assault he had had the courage to face the mob, and made good use of his musket, calling out each time he fired, *Salvum fac populum tuum Domine*.*

Thus far victory had declared itself decidedly on the side of St. Mark's; and the defenders became more and more emboldened, when a new proclamation of the Signory came out, declaring as rebels all who did not leave the convent within one hour.† Some of the defenders upon this asked for a safe conduct, and left the convent, thus weakening the already too small body of their companions. It now becoming evident that the Signory were determined to subdue St. Mark's, the defenders became much disheartened; and, being reduced in number, began to lose hope and to think of surrendering. Savonarola and many of the friars had remained in the choir engaged in prayers, which were every now and then interrupted by the cries of some one who had been wounded,

* Burlamacchi and several of the depositions of the accused mention this.

† By another proclamation all who should go to St. Mark's were declared to be rebels; that however, did not prevent the soldiers of the Signory from going to the assistance of the besiegers.

or by the piteous groans of a dying man. Among the dying was a young man of the family of the Panciatici, who, mortally wounded, had been laid upon the steps of the high altar, where, amidst the shots from the hand-guns, he received the communion from the hands of Frà Domenico, in whose arms he expired, with a cheerful countenance, saying—‘How sweet it is for the brethren to be thus again found together!’*

Night had now arrived; and the friars, worn with agitation and fasting, ate some dried figs brought to them by some of their companions. On a sudden, however, the defence was valiantly resumed; the cries became more furious; the shots of the guns more frequent; among which, that of Enrico, the German, could be distinguished as the most active. He had mounted the pulpit, from which Savonarola had so often preached; and from thence he sent his deadly shots. A thick smoke now began to spread everywhere; so that, to prevent suffocation, they were obliged to break the glass of the windows in the choir: and now vast flames burst into the interior of the church from the doors which had been set on fire. The German and another then retreated to the choir; and, climbing up behind the high altar, and placing themselves on each side of the great crucifix, they continued to make good use of their arms.†

Savonarola, deeply lamenting such an useless shedding of blood, and unable, by any effort he could make, to prevent it—for no one would listen to him—again took the sacrament in his hand, and told all to follow him. Passing through the cloisters, he was leading the greater number into the Greek library, when he perceived Frà Benedetto, who had just then come down from the roof,

* Burlamacchi, and the depositions of the witnesses.

† Burlamacchi. Examinations of Frà Luca della Robbia, of Girolamo Gini and others.

armed and full of rage, hastening to engage the enemy at closer quarters. Savonarola stopped him; and, fixing his eyes upon him, said in a tone of severe reproof—‘Frà Benedetto, lay down your arms, and take up the cross. It never has been my wish that my brethren should shed blood.’ Benedetto humbly threw himself at the feet of his superior, laid down his arms, and, with the rest, followed him into the library.

In the middle of that hall, under the simple vaults of Michelozzi, he placed the sacrament, collecting his brethren around him, and addressed them in his last and memorable words: ‘My sons—in the presence of God, standing before the sacred host, and with my enemies already in the convent, I now confirm my doctrine. What I have said came to me from God, and He is my witness in heaven that what I say is true. I little thought that the whole city would so soon have turned against me; but God’s will be done. My last admonition to you is this—Let your arms be faith, patience, and prayer. I leave you with anguish and pain, to pass into the hands of my enemies. I know not whether they will take my life; but of this I am certain, that dead, I shall be able to do far more for you in heaven, than living I have ever had power to do on earth. Be comforted, embrace the cross, and by that you will find the haven of salvation.’*

The enemy had now got full possession of the convent; and Giovacchino della Vecchia, who commanded the Palazzo guard, threatened to destroy everything with his artillery if the commands of the Signory were not immediately obeyed. These were, that on the faith that their persons would be safe, Frà Girolamo, Frà Domenico, and Frà Salvestro should be delivered up. But Malatesta Sacramoro, the same who had offered to pass through the fire, began to play the part of Judas; he

* Frà Benedetto, *Cedrus Libani*, cap. ix.

had a conference with the Compagnacci, and advised them to bring a written order. While they sent to obtain it from the Signory, Savonarola confessed to Frà Domenico, received the communion from him, and prepared to give himself up with Frà Domenico.* Frà Salvestro had concealed himself, and in the disturbance it was not easy to find him.†

A singular incident occurred about this time. Girolamo Gini, a follower of the Friar, who had long desired to assume the Dominican dress, was that evening at vespers; and scarcely had the tumult begun than he armed himself to defend the convent. When Savonarola ordered him to lay aside his arms the good citizen obeyed; but he ran through the cloisters, facing the enemy, wishing, as he said, to meet death for the love of Jesus Christ; and, having been wounded, he entered the Greek library, his head streaming with blood; threw himself on his knees before Savonarola, and humbly asked that the convent dress might be given to him—a request which was immediately granted.

Some of the friends of Savonarola now proposed that

* Burlamacchi; Frà Benedetto, *Cedrus Libani*; Violi, *Giornata quarta*; and the depositions of the accused.

† Burlamacchi and others leave no doubt of Salvestro having hid himself. We have not been able to find any authority in confirmation of another fact of a similar nature, first mentioned by Vasari, and repeated by others; namely, that the celebrated painter Baccio della Porta, known afterwards by the name of Frà Bartolommeo, was then in the convent, and from cowardice had hid himself. This appears to us very improbable; the resistance was much less than was said; the greater number of the friars, and many of the seculars, were without arms, and were obedient to the orders of Savonarola. Baccio therefore might have done this. Frà Salvestro certainly concealed himself, but it was only through fear of being made a prisoner. In order, however, to be quite impartial, we are bound to add, that it appears from the depositions of the accused, that one of the seculars did hide himself, so that it is not impossible that the fact may refer to Baccio della Porta; but nothing of the kind is mentioned in any of the examinations. Besides, Vasari lived at a much later period, and was by no means friendly either to St. Mark's or to Savonarola, and is therefore not a very good authority on such matters. For these reasons we are inclined to believe that his statement is untrue.

he would allow them to let him down from the wall, and so effect his escape; for, once in the Palazzo, it would not be easy for him to come out of it alive. He seemed to hesitate whether he should accept this proposal, as the only means of safety; when Frà Malatesta, turning to him, said—‘Ought not the shepherd to give up his life for his flock?’ The words appeared to make a deep impression upon Savonarola, who, however, made no answer; but embracing and kissing all his brethren, and, first of all, this very Malatesta, he surrendered without hesitation, as did the faithful and inseparable Frà Domenico, into the hands of the mace-bearer of the Signory, who had just then returned.* He again turned to his brethren, and said—‘My brethren, remember never to doubt! The work of the Lord is ever progressive, and my death will only hasten it.’† The two friends had no sooner come down into the cloisters, than the mob, pressing around them, gave a shout of ferocious joy. At this moment Frà Benedetto, who had followed after them, could not restrain his anguish; but, sobbing and weeping, forced his way among the crowd, saying that he wished to go as a prisoner with his master. But all were now insane with rage; and another portion of the crowd hurried Frà Girolamo and Frà Domenico forward into the piazza. Frà Benedetto remained in the cloister sad and desolate. He tells us that so frightful a cry was then heard that everyone believed that at that moment Savonarola had been killed.‡

It was now eight o’clock in the evening. The dense mob looked like a tumultuous sea of helmets, cuirasses, swords, and spears, from which the light of lanterns

* Burlamacchi; Violi, *Giornate*, giorn. iv.; Frà Benedetto, *Cedrus Libani*.

† Burlamacchi, p. 143.

‡ Burlamacchi, Frà Benedetto, &c.

and torches was dimly reflected. The people gazed on Savonarola with threatening looks; and holding up their lanterns to his face, exclaimed, 'This is the true light.' They scorched and burned his face with their flambeaux, saying, 'Now for a turn of the key;' they twisted his fingers and beat him, insultingly calling out, 'Prophecy now to us who it was who beat you!' So great was their fury that the guards could with difficulty protect him by crossing their arms and shields over him. It is more easy to imagine than to describe the insults he had to endure by the way, nor did the fierce mob desist until he was in the Palazzo. He had scarcely set foot within the postern gate than one of them kicked him behind, saying, 'That is the seat of your prophecies.'*

At length the two friars were brought before the Gonfaloniere, who asked them if they still persisted in maintaining that their sayings came from God, and as they replied in the affirmative, they were shut up in two different cells. To Savonarola was assigned that called the Alberghettino,† a small room in the tower of the Palazzo, the same in which, some years before, Cosmo de' Medici had for a while been imprisoned. Here, after a day of so much suffering, he found a little rest. His brother Alberto, who was accidentally in Florence, had been arrested that night, but was soon set at liberty. Next day, Frà Salvestro came out of his hiding place, and was immediately delivered up by Sacromoro to his enemies, who were feasting on luxurious dishes placed upon the table that served for the frugal meals of the friars.‡

* Burlamacchi.

† A diminutive of *Albergo*, an inn.—Tr.

‡ Burlamacchi, &c. The account here given of the events of this day has been drawn up from the works of Burlamacchi, Pico, Razzi and Barsanti, but more particularly from the poem entitled the *Cedrus Libani* of Frà Benedetto, from the depositions of the persons accused, from the examinations of the friars, the deliberations of the Signory, and the documents supplied by Padre Marchese. The abundance of the materials, instead of facilitating the task, increased our difficulty. All

The Signory made all haste to announce what had happened that evening of the 8th of April to the Courts of Rome, Milan, France, and other princes, taking care to give such a colouring to their account of the facts as would best accord with the disposition of the government they addressed. They charged their Ambassador at Rome to obtain from the Pope a general absolution from all the censures they might have incurred, such as for having so long tolerated the sermons of Savonarola, and as having laid violent hands on an ecclesiastic; they, moreover asked for liberty to put the friars on their trial; nor did they omit the opportunity of urging the clergy being made liable to the tenth-tax. It can easily be imagined how eagerly the Pope sent back his answer to the Florentine Signory; he called them true sons of the Holy Church; he granted absolution for all they asked, all the power they desired to have, and every benediction; warmly recommending that so soon as the trials of the friars were over, they should be immediately delivered up to him, to receive the punishment they deserved. As to the tenth-tax, and everything else, he was bountiful in promises. The Duke of Milan sent a special messenger with letters of congratulation; saying that he was ready to give his assistance to the Republic, that he would support them in all the dangers they might have to encounter, restore Pisa to them, and so forth.*

But the news most gratifying to the enemies of Savonarola came from a quarter they least expected.

in fact, relate the same particulars, but each differently, according as he witnessed them, or remembered them, or as suited his way of relating them; and as to the depositions of the persons accused, it was necessary to take into account the greater or less part they had acted in the proceedings. It was only by a diligent, laborious and most minute examination of the materials, that it was possible to arrive at what may be said to be an authentic narrative of the facts, all resting, however, upon the faithful accounts of eye-witnesses.

* Nardi, p. 164 and following; Burlamacchi; Padre Marchese, documents xxv. and xxx.

Letters were received from France, dated April 7, the same day that the ordeal by fire was to have taken place, stating that Charles VIII. had died at Amboise. His end had been a miserable one, as Savonarola had often predicted it would be, because of his having abandoned the work of the Lord. Having had a stroke of apoplexy he was carried into a place full of all kinds of filthy rubbish,* and there, upon a bed of straw, the King of France drew his last breath. Never before, however, was a prophecy less opportunely verified, nor more to the injury of the prophet. Savonarola lost in Charles his last and most powerful support; he lost him at the very moment when on him alone his safety might have depended; and at the very time when the King seemed to be again turning his thoughts to the affairs of Italy and to a religious reformation.† But, as we have already said, time for illusions was past: all events, all persons, were now turned against the poor Friar; and there was no longer any hope left for him on earth.

* See Comines, *Mémoires*, lib. viii. ch. xviii. 'Etoit le plus deshonneste lieu, car tout le monde y pissoit, et estoit rompue à l'entrée.'

† Comines *Mémoires*, lib. viii. ch. xviii. See his words quoted in the sixth chapter of this book, p. 267. Guasconi also, in announcing to Mazzinghi Charles's death, said: 'And now, just as he showed himself to be about doing something, life was taken from him.' See the letter in the *Esamina del Mazzinghi*.

CHAPTER IX.

EXAMINATIONS AND TORTURE OF SAVONAROLA—THE MAGISTRATES OF THE REPUBLIC, AFTER THE COMPILATION OF TWO FALSIFIED MINUTES OF THE EXAMINATIONS, ARE UNABLE TO FIND HIM GUILTY.

THE day after the tumult was Holy Monday,* the first of those days sacred to religion, in which the people were wont to crowd around Savonarola, and whose sermons on those occasions used always to be most fervent and eloquent. He was now a prisoner in the hands of his enemies. There was extraordinary activity in the Palazzo, and much coming and going of mace-bearers and soldiers, who, in the name of the magistrates, sent for all those who were known to be partisans of the Friar and of the popular government. Some, in spite of the express prohibition, succeeded in escaping from the city; others, on the contrary, presented themselves. And thus, besides Savonarola and his two companions, Frà Domenico and Frà Salvestro, seventeen were sent to prison, some of them laymen, others friars, who had been found among the defenders of the convent, or were known to have been intimate with Savonarola. St. Mark's, after having been sacked, was carefully searched, every corner of it was examined, and especially the cell of Savonarola, in order to try to discover papers which would be useful in getting up that process which they intended should end in his destruction. The rest of the friars had retired to

* Monday in Easter week.—Tr.

the infirmary, and after they had attended to the dying and the wounded, they erected an altar and were preparing for prayers.* While so engaged, the Compagnacci collected all the weapons they could find in the convent and the church, and placing them, all bloody as they were, upon a cart, which they led round the city, showed them to the people, calling out, 'Here you see what the virtue of St. Mark's was; here are the miracles of the Friar, and the signs of the love he bore to the people of Florence.'

These things were not without their effect upon the minds of the multitude, who considered themselves deceived and deluded, by not having witnessed any miracle on the day of the ordeal, nor on that day when the convent was attacked. The Signory, striking the iron while it was hot, left no means untried by which they might attain their end. That same day they called a meeting, to consider in what way the examinations should be conducted, and they clearly showed by their language that they had firmly resolved not only to violate their promise that Savonarola should be unharmed, but that they were prepared to violate both the customs and the laws of the Republic.

They began by asking, 'Whether the three friars whom they had got into their hands should, for the honour of the Republic, be tried in Florence, or be given up to the Pope, in compliance with his demand?† They then made a glowing representation of the many promises they had received, and of the bright prospects of advantage to the Republic in consequence of this capture. They concluded by asking, 'What was to be done with the offices of the Dieci di Libertà and the Otto di Guardia, as at present filled?'‡ To these offices it

* Burlamacchi, p. 144.

† See the *Frammenti di Pratiche*, quoted above.

‡ Legally, the Otto ought to have been the judges on the trial.

belonged by law to judge in State causes, and the Signory wished to secure the judgement being such as they desired, by proceeding to the election of the new magistrates of these courts before the legal time. We do not exactly know what passed in the meeting, for the reports of all the speeches that were made have been lost, except that of Vespucci, which has come down to us almost entire. We have seen this same Vespucci in 1494 opposing the popular party, in order to promote the government of a few; in 1495 defending the ultra-democratic law of the *sei fave*; and, at a later period, defending the five citizens who had conspired in favour of the Medici; and now he was one of the first to turn against Savonarola. He rose to speak from the bench of the doctors of laws, and gave as his opinion that Frà Jeronimo should be examined by competent persons, but that when the examination was over, there would be no necessity to publish the whole, but only such parts of it as their excellencies might approve; that the Friar ought not to be sent to Rome, but that the Pope should be informed that he would be kept in safe custody. As to the office of the Dieci, some were of opinion that the new judges ought to be elected, while others proposed that the new members should be united in office with the old, to the end of the legal term. As to the Otto, he observed that their term of office was about to expire.* Almost all agreed to this course; some one adding,† that if the election did not turn out to the satisfaction of the Signory they should have power to proceed to another.‡

In substance, full power was given to the Signory to make and unmake these offices at their pleasure. The party

* The then judges in the Court of the Otto went out of office at the end of this same month of April; but the Dieci had still two months to remain.

† So at least it would appear from the *Frammenti di Pratiche* which we have had before us.

‡ See among the *Frammenti di Pratiche*, that of April 9, 1498.

of the Piagnoni was almost extinguished ; the Arrabbiati were masters of the city ; and the Signory could venture upon anything they pleased. They, in fact, chose the new Dieci and Otto, making them sit along with those who were still in office. On the 11th of April they appointed an extraordinary commission of seventeen examiners, for the express purpose of conducting the trial of the three friars ; empowering them to make use of torture, or of any other means they might think necessary, to attain their object. We need only mention the names of those who composed the commission, to enable us to judge the sort of justice and impartiality that would be observed in the trial. Among them was that same Piero degli Alberti whom we have seen exhibiting such audacity and barefaced pertinacity against Savonarola on the day of the ordeal. There was Doffo Spini, the leader of the Compagnacci, the chief author of all the plots against him—the promoter and head of the tumult on Ascension-day, of that on the day of the ordeal, and of the attack on the convent. He it was who had many times attempted to kill the unhappy Friar by hired assassins, and had even made the attempt with his own hand, in the streets, in the church, and in the very pulpit. He was now chosen as one of the new Otto, was put in the commission where he could compile minutes of the trial, and then give judgement. His person was well-known to Savonarola ; he had many times seen him with ferocious vengeance in his look, his hand upon the hilt of his half-drawn sword, seeking to force his way through an impenetrable circle of devoted friends heroically exposing their lives in defence of their master. He was now to be seen in an official dress, transformed into a judge ; and it may easily be conceived with what humanity and honesty the examination would be conducted. From the very outset, the

violation of all law and justice was so apparent, that one of the examiners indignantly refused to continue to act, saying that he would not be present at such homicide.*

The commission was not completely settled by the 11th of April; for the two Florentine canons† named upon it by order of the Pope could not receive their mandate from Rome before the 14th. Nevertheless, we have seen that Savonarola was examined by the Gonfaloniere on the night of the 8th, when he was arrested; and the proceedings of the special examiners commenced the following day, before all the members of the commission had been named.

On being interrogated that day, he adhered to his doctrine; and to those who asked him other questions, he replied—‘You tempt the Lord!’‡ Materials for writing were put before him; but the first things he wrote down were such, that the sheet was immediately torn to pieces; and all idea of having any depositions in his own handwriting, as was required by law, was given up. These few lines, thus irrecoverably lost,§ may be said to be the only genuine confession of Savonarola; for, as we shall presently show, he was not allowed to put his hand to paper throughout the whole of his examination.||

That first day there was so much confusion in the Palazzo, that they did not advance farther; but next day the Friar was taken to the upper hall in the Bar-

* Burlamacchi relates the fact, and says that it was Francesco degli Albizzi; but he is mistaken, because we find that name at the head of the printed trial. Bartolo dei Zati is the name found in the commission appointed on April 11, which does not appear in the printed documents, where the examiners are only sixteen, instead of seventeen, as first nominated.

† Burlamacchi, Pico, Barsanti, &c.

‡ Ibidem.

§ Ibidem, Frà Benedetto, Violi, &c.

|| Hence the idea of a genuine account of the trial, written by himself, is purely imaginary.

gello, where, after having been interrogated, threatened, and insulted, they bound him to a hoisting rope to torture him.* He was hoisted up, and then let down suddenly; his arms, by being drawn up backwards, were made to describe a semicircle; the muscles were thus lacerated, and all the limbs quivered with pain. The torture of the rope, used lightly, was not one of the most cruel; but it might be applied in such a way as to tear the strongest fibre and subdue the firmest mind. When continued for some time, it was sure to produce delirium and death; and therefore, to extort from the accused person whatever confession was desired became only a question of time. Savonarola, from early youth, was of a delicate and sensitive frame; and in consequence of habitual abstinence, long night-watchings, and preachings for eight years without interruption, he was become so very weak and nervous, that his life may be said to have been one constant state of suffering, and was only preserved by the force of his determined will. All that had occurred in these last days—his dangers, the insults he had met with, his grief at seeing himself forsaken—had not a little added to that morbid sensibility. In this condition he was subjected to this violent and cruel torture. As was to be expected, his mind soon began to wander; his answers were incoherent; and at last, as if despairing of himself, he cried out, in a voice enough to melt a heart of stone, but not those of his judges—‘O Lord! take, O take, my life!’† Happy would it have been if death had ensued at that moment! His memory would not then have been subjected to many fresh calumnies—his heart would not have had to bear a long series of fresh agonies.

* In this species of torture a rope was attached to a pulley on a high pole, the person to be tortured had his hands tied behind his back, the end of the rope was wound round his wrists, and in this posture he was drawn up and let down by the executioner.—Tr.

† Burlamacchi, p. 145-6; Pico, p. 77; Barsanti, p. 315.

When the examiners saw that they could then get only incoherent answers from him, they loosened him from the rope to send him back to prison; upon which he fell on his knees, and prayed for his executioners—‘Lord, they know not what they do.’* On the following day the commission was completed; and they began to draw up that which was termed *a trial*; the beginning of a series of various and contradictory opinions respecting Savonarola, in which there is the greatest difficulty to distinguish the true from the false. Truth and falsehood are so strangely mixed up, that it is often equally difficult to believe and to disbelieve.

We are not able to say how often he was subjected to this torture; but it is certain that it took more than a month to compile the various proceedings; and during that time his torments were long, continuous, and cruel. It was affirmed by an eye-witness, that on one day he had seen him drawn up by the rope fourteen times.† Pico and Burlamacchi add, that while he was drawn up, live coals were applied to the soles of his feet;‡ and while in torments in that state, they wrote down that ‘his answers had been given spontaneously, and in an uninjured state of his body.’ That he was not always able to endure the torture has been affirmed by so great a number of writers, that we cannot withhold our belief from their statements, although very many of his followers declare the contrary. But Nature itself is more worthy of belief than all the writers put together. How was it possible not to yield to such cruel and prolonged tortures, when inflicted on a man of so sensitive and delicate a frame that the first application of the rope made him delirious? The executioner himself said that he had never seen anyone on whom the

* Pico, Burlamacchi, Barsanti.

† Lorenzo Violi, *Giornata*, vi.

‡ Burlamacchi, Pico, &c.

torture produced so immediate and severe an effect.* There can be little doubt that even with a lacerated body and a troubled spirit he would have mounted the pulpit, and, in the presence of the assembled people, and under the influence of the thousand loving and eager eyes directed towards him, he would have summoned up his entire self, and would have found strength to maintain his whole doctrine, even with the sacrifice of his last word, uttered with his last breath. Before the hard faces of stone of his enemies—who neither listened to him, nor, if they did, understood him, and who were thinking of nothing else than a renewal of his torments—how could he find strength to repeat, to explain, to defend his visions, his prophecies; he whose mind was in a state of delirium? How could he be held responsible for answers, who was not conscious of what he was saying?

But for Savonarola there must have been a moment of extreme anguish, perhaps the most painful of his whole life—when, after his first subjection to the torture, he was sent back to the solitude of the Alberghettino cell. He was then conscious that he had not been able to resist the torments; that when tied to the rope his mind soon began to wander, and then they might have extorted from him any answer they wished for. What was he then to do? When the torture was greater than he could bear, it was necessary for him to yield some point, and so it became a matter of choice. The questions bore upon three heads—religion, politics, prophecy. To have given way on the first did not admit of a moment's consideration; it would have been better to suffer a thousand deaths: to have given way on politics would have been base, for it would have been a compromise of the whole people and of liberty. Still,

* Burlamacchi, p. 145-6; Pico, p. 26.

concession was to be made of something, and nothing remained but prophecy and visions.

We have already seen that whenever this subject of prophecy came forward, as it continually did, it was impossible for Savonarola to abstain from endless sophisms. Now, in the solitude of his prison, broken down by the first application of the torture, debilitated by the weakness of his nervous system, we can easily believe that he gave way to the workings of his fancy more than ever. His reasonings at that time have been in great part revealed to us through Pico and Burlamacchi, but have been still more minutely described by Violi and Frà Benedetto, who spent their lives in examining and commenting upon the details of his examinations. They were so imbued with the ideas and even with the sophisms of their master, that what they say often seems as if it came from his own mouth. What they tell us on this subject so accords not only with all his ideas and with his whole life, but even with his very words, that we may place entire faith in them.

He began with recalling some passages in St. Thomas Aquinas, where it is said that we are not bound to tell the whole truth to perverse judges; referring to the Bible, he found that Amos, Micah, Zechariah, and John the Baptist, had at times denied that they were prophets; and he remembered that Jesus Christ had done the same. Why then might not, ought not, he to follow their example? * Nor was this mode of reasoning adopted now for the first time. We often

* The most faithful followers of Savonarola, those who had had the best opportunity of becoming acquainted with his doctrines, have written whole volumes on this subject. See Pico, ch. xvii.; Frà Benedetto, *Vulnera Diligentis*, lib. ii. ch. 21, and *passim*; the third book of that work, which had been quite unknown, but was found by us in the Riccardian library, discourses upon it at great length. The whole of the seventh *Giornata* of Lorenzo Violi is devoted to it.

find him saying, after having prophesied from the pulpit, —‘I am neither a prophet nor the son of a prophet; I never have said that I was a prophet,’ and such like. But when, the next day, he came to explain these contradictions, he got involved in such a sea of allegorical interpretations and sophisms as to be wholly unintelligible. It is but reasonable, therefore, to expect to find in his depositions at this time the same man and the same contradictions. If he was always allegorical and obscure on this matter of prophecy, we may easily imagine what he must have been when his object was to confound his judges.

It is moreover to be considered, that firmness of character and heroism in the greatest men are founded on truth and faith; now we have seen how those visions and prophecies of Savonarola were in great part the effect of fanaticism, sincere no doubt, but still fanaticism. How then could it be possible for him to find strength to sustain them in tortures which made him lose his senses, when we know that if we examine his inmost mind on that subject we find only superstition and sophisms? It was the weak side of his life and character, it was that which most exasperated the examiners in the application of the torture, and is, we must frankly confess, the least praiseworthy part of his depositions. He asserts one thing, and then contradicts it, affirms and then denies; he never was able to speak distinctly on the subject, for he himself did not see it clearly; he could not demonstrate with force, because he was weak, and the unhappy victim of hallucinations. How then could we expect to find him heroic on such questions?

The Signory after they had destroyed the autograph confession of the Friar, after having had him interrogated with torture, were much disappointed by the results, and were puzzled what course to take. To fabricate

a downright false examination was a thing they could not all be induced to agree to; besides a discovery might easily be made, which might lead to unpleasant and even dangerous consequences. The people, in the meantime, were murmuring at the tardiness of the proceedings, and the Signory went about lamenting the difficulties they had to encounter. It was then that Ceccone, a Florentine Notary, hearing of these regrets from one of the examiners, replied with an impudent smile, 'Where no cause exists we must invent one,' adding that he would be bold enough to take the thing in hand.

He had originally belonged to the Palleschi (Medicean) faction, and was implicated in the conspiracy of Piero de' Medici, on the discovery of which he took refuge in St. Mark's, where he found protection and safety. Here he became a convert to religion, was regular in his daily attendance at the sermons, and acted the part of a Piagnone. This, however, did not prevent his continuing to be a spy of the Duke of Milan, to whom he daily wrote in cypher, informing him of all that was passing in Florence.* He continued this course of life until the imprisonment of Savonarola, when he again showed himself his enemy, by offering to make out a false minute of the examinations, with slight alterations, but such as would secure the condemnation of the Friar. His offer was accepted, with a promise of 400 ducats; although from his not being the Notary of the Signory, he could not legally officiate.†

The answers extorted by the torture were then altered. 'Yes' was sometimes substituted for 'no,' or *vice*

* Burlamacchi, p. 147. Frà Benedetto, *Vulnera Diligentis*, lib. ii. cap. 20. Ceccone might be *that second friend* mentioned by Franchettino and the other spies of The Moor, in the numerous letters they write.

† Violi speaks with great indignation of this violation of the laws, as does also Frà Benedetto.

versâ; sometimes entire and long sentences were left out and phrases added, such as: *this was my hypocrisy; my pride; I did it for worldly glory*; and such like. To all this the examiners and the Notary affixed their signatures.* There are besides many blank spaces in the minutes, and the additions are most evident, for very often neither in the sense nor in the grammatical construction do they agree with the passage in which they are inserted. It is most clear that the examiners being aware that neither by threats, by torture, nor by falsifying the depositions, they could convict the accused, they did what they could to lower him in the esteem and admiration of his followers.

We have already said that the trial was directed to three heads—prophecy, religion, and politics, and that the first was the Friar's weak point, that on which he had not strength to resist the torture. He sincerely believed that he was a prophet, but relied upon a faith very different from that inspired by truth, religion and liberty; for this faith he was fortified with all the courage and heroism of a martyr; the other was a kind of superstitious and indistinct dream, from which he could not liberate himself in moments of exalted

* On this subject the following passage occurs in Nardi's *Storia di Firenze*: 'That I may not be found guilty by my own conscience of concealing a truth, I am constrained to say, that an eminent and noble citizen, who had been one of the examiners of the said friars, and had been elected to that office, although decidedly hostile to them, he having been banished with many other citizens, after the return of the Medici, and being one day at his villa, on my asking him, with reference to a certain circumstance as to the veracity of the report of the process, answered me quite ingenuously, in the presence of his wife, that it was quite true that in the process of Frà Girolamo, *for the sake of the object in view, some things were left out and some added*. These were the exact words of his reply; I know not whether they be true, but this I know, that they are here truly set down, and so far I believe that I can refer to them as true.' See Burlamacchi, Pico, Violi, &c. We have in general been guided in our narrative, by the testimony of contemporary authors and original documents, but in this chapter we have been more than ordinarily scrupulous, and can assure the reader that almost every expression we have employed rests upon some original document.

meditation, or in the excitement of the pulpit, when his fancy was inflamed by the thousand believing looks of his audience; but it was a dream which vanished before the terrible reality of the last hour. He himself lamented this, for he said, ‘O Lord, thou hast taken from me the spirit of prophecy.’*

Nevertheless, the first time that he was interrogated on this subject, in the presence of the whole commission, he confirmed what he had maintained about his visions; told them that an angel had appeared to him in the form of a child, and conversed with him in a divine voice, and concluded by saying, ‘Leave this alone, for if it be from God, you will have a clear sign of it; but if it be of man, it will fall to the ground. But whether I be a prophet or not is not an affair of the State, and no one has a right to condemn or judge the thoughts of others.’† But when he was again subjected to the torture, he denied his being a prophet, and afterwards reasserted it; again tortured, he began to explain by allegories and equivocal answers, which, being continually altered by the notary, form such a mass of confusion that it is often impossible to make anything out of them. But no sooner did the examiners leave off asking questions about the visions than instantly the fancied prophet ceased to be the respondent, and the heroic martyr of religion and liberty spoke out.

In the second part of the trial he had to speak of his works, and was then quite equal to himself; the torture proved powerless in moving him on that subject. He openly affirmed that the Church must first be scourged, and then renovated. He said, ‘To aid me in this object which I had at heart, I told of things in my sermons by which Christians might

* It will be seen hereafter that he repeats these words.

† This passage is entirely left out in the printed edition of the process, but was in the first draft which Violi had read. See the passage in the seventh *Giornata*.

‘ know the abominations practised at Rome, so as that
‘ they should desire to have a General Council called, for
‘ if that were accomplished, I hoped to see many prelates,
‘ and also the Pope, deposed, and I should have endeavoured
‘ to be there; and, being there, I felt confident
‘ that I should preach and do such things as would be
‘ glorious in the result.’ And proceeding in this strain
he often repeated, ‘ I contemplated doing great things
‘ in Italy and beyond it.’ Being asked if he thought
he should be elected Pope, he answered, ‘ No, for if I
had accomplished such a work, I should have appeared
more than Cardinal or Pope.’ If, then, we find words
such as these in the minutes of his examinations, falsified
as they were by Ceccone, can we doubt that he
knew how to maintain his religious sentiments with
courage and heroism?

He exhibited the same courage when he was interrogated
on political matters. Neither additions nor alterations
could conceal the Friar’s explicit replies. He threw back
with indignation the charge that he had got possession of
State secrets by means of the confessional. He repeated
again and again that he had never asked to be told
matters of State; that he had never shown favour or
disfavour to anyone; that he had spoken of State
affairs in general, leaving the details to Valori, Soderini,
and others of greater experience than himself. ‘ My sole
object was to favour free government in general and such
laws as would improve it.’ He pointed out some of the
principal laws he had proposed, or had in his mind to
propose at a later period, such as that of the appointment
of the Gonfaloniere for life; and it is worthy of remark
how he says in one place that, doubts having arisen in
his mind that some of the friends whom he most trusted
were wishing to combine in a scheme to keep the government
in their own hands, he

immediately began to preach against tyranny and against any government being in the hands of a few; for, whether through favour or by force, such men favour that form of government. When speaking of liberty, he had no respect of persons; he would not have forgiven its infringement by any of his dearest and most faithful followers. And this is shown with the clearest evidence even in the minutes drawn up by Ceccone, with the express purpose of bringing ruin upon him.

After eleven days of torture, they were at last forced to bring an examination to an end which, although got up with so much illegality, falsifying, and cunning, failed in accomplishing their design, and with which the Signory expressed the greatest disappointment. In writing to the Pope, they regretted that it had been so much prolonged; and they were constrained to say: 'We have had to deal with a man of most extraordinary patience in suffering, and of the greatest sagacity; who hardened himself against torture, involved the truth in all kinds of obscurity, and seemed to be deliberating either about establishing for himself, by pretended sanctity, an eternal fame with posterity, or to brave imprisonment and death. Notwithstanding a long and most careful interrogatory, and with all the help of torture, we could scarcely extract anything out of him which he wished to conceal from us, although we laid open almost the inmost recesses of his mind.'*

* 'Nobis fuit cum homine patientissimi corporis et sagacissimi animi, qui contra tormenta animum obdurasset, et veritatem multis tenebris continue involveret; quique videretur ad hoc eo consilio accessisse, ut aut simulata sanctitate æternum sibi nomen apud homines pareret, aut in carcerem et in mortem iret: multaque et assidua quæstione, multis diebus, per vim, vix pauca extorsimus; quæ nunc celare animus erat, donec omnia nobis paterent sui animi involucra.' The Signory most certainly said what was not true, in declaring that he had been most patient in bodily suffering; it is, however, remarkable that Padre Marchese should be displeased with the writer of this letter, and should almost consider it to be injurious to Savonarola, while it is unquestionably a

It is most certain that throughout the whole of the examinations, Savonarola proved himself to be the same man as we have hitherto known him. He exhibited a combination of genius with superstition; of profound reasoning with trivial sophisms; of sublime heroism with occasionally most unexpected weakness; but, substantially, a lofty, generous, and powerful nature. He first affirmed, and then denied, his prophetic power; but when questioned on those points on which his mind and heart were clear, he became all at once invulnerable. Threats, promises, and repeated torturings could effect nothing; his mind remained unshaken, even when in delirium. It was not surprising, therefore, that the Signory were greatly disappointed by the examination. They found, with grief and the utmost mortification, that, notwithstanding tortures and falsifications, Savonarola came out innocent. One only advantage they had obtained, that of having discredited the Friar in the minds of his followers. Once deprived of popular favour, they felt that they could venture to condemn him, without being called to account for a violation either of law or justice. But it was indispensable that the depositions should be signed, as they were not in the handwriting of the accused, which the law required them to be.

It was necessary, however, to persuade Savonarola to affix his signature. It is certainly difficult to say in what way they tried to accomplish this. The examiners state, that for two days they were endeavouring to per-

splendid monument to his fame. And we must here remark that some of the admirers of the Friar, through excessive love for him, have sometimes done him greater wrong than his detractors. Thus Nardi, for example, although he on more than one occasion confesses that he was imperfectly informed as to the examinations of Savonarola, yet thought himself justified in affirming that the torture was light; and an infinite number of writers have, upon his authority, repeated this, without observing that all the biographers, chroniclers and contemporary writers affirm the contrary, and that the reverse has also been declared by the Signory.

suade him *by humane assurances*;* one can easily imagine the kind of humanity this must have been. Burlamacchi asserts that one copy of his depositions was read to him and that he was then made to sign a different copy.† What was said by the examiners and the notary gives some countenance to this. The notary after having made the first minutes, in which he had already inserted alterations in Savonarola's answers, drew out another copy with fresh omissions and additions. According to all probability the first of these was read to him, that the second was laid before him for his signature, and that it was this last which was printed. Nevertheless, the differences between the two, although many and important, were not substantial; as clearly appears from Violi, who transcribed the greater part of them. We may consequently affirm, that on April 19, in presence of eight witnesses, six of whom were friars of St. Mark's, Savonarola signed a copy of his depositions, which, although not compromising any part of his doctrines, he had better have torn in pieces. But losing himself amongst his own allegories, he thought he had done all that was necessary for the safety of his dignity and his conscience. It is necessary for us again to repeat, once for all, that Savonarola did not consider himself to be in the condition of other men; he was convinced that he had supernatural gifts, and that he ought not to speak the language common to other men, nor reveal all his thoughts, as the vulgar would not have understood them, whilst allegorical expressions were perfectly intelligible to the faithful. Such a

* See the copy of the trial.

† By the printed minutes of the examinations we are made to believe that Savonarola had signed that one, but the contrary is shown to have been the case, both by his biographers and by the signatures of the witnesses. One of the latter was Adimari, and he added to his subscription these words: 'what is written above having been read to him,' &c.

system, pursued through an entire lifetime, in his preachings, in his writings, in familiar conversations, he continued in his depositions. And whoever would have a clear idea of the effect of that mystical language, must read those sermons in which their author comments upon himself, the writings of his scholars, and especially the explanations of his examinations by Frà Benedetto: he will then see that very often the words employed signify the contrary of their verbal meaning.*

It is related that after the notary had read the depositions to him he was asked, 'Is that which is here written true?' to which he replied, 'That which I have written is true,' availing himself of a form of expression, and which Frà Benedetto, Burlamacchi, and Pico admire, comparing it with the answer of Jesus Christ to his judges. But we give no belief to such anecdotes, many of which were pure inventions of eager and blind admirers, who were willing to consider Savonarola not as a mere man, but as a saint; men who kept a lamp burning before his likeness, and offered up prayers to him. It is certain, however, that when all the witnesses had signed, he turned round to them and uttered these precise words:—'My doctrine is known to you, and is 'known to all. In this state of tribulation I ask of 'you only two things: take care of the novices and see 'that they are preserved in that Christian doctrine in 'which we have hitherto maintained them; and pray to 'the Lord for me, whose spirit of prophecy has at this 'time forsaken me.'† Whereupon Malatesta Sacromoro, determined to continue to play the part of Judas, said— 'But are the things which you have subscribed true

* See *Vulnera Diligentis*, lib. ii. cap. 16 and following, where the examination is minutely described. See also the third part of that work, which relates to it almost exclusively.

† Burlamacchi, p. 146; Pico, p. 79.

or false?' upon which Savonarola, looking at him with an eye of scorn, turned his back upon him, without condescending to make any reply, and returned to his prison.* He would here have deliberately reviewed all he had said, but his troubled and wearied mind soon took the direction of mystical contemplations; his prison became peopled by supernatural creations, by invisible beings, and when once carried off to that world, every other thought vanished from his mind.

The Signory, after a long discussion, resolved to print the depositions, to which the Notary was strongly opposed. They, a third time, made new changes, but notwithstanding all these, the publication had scarcely appeared when there arose so universal an outcry against the Signory, that they issued the most strict orders that all the copies should be given up. They were, in general, obeyed, but a few days afterwards, a second edition came out,† and for this there was no remedy.

* Burlamacchi.

† There were two editions of the proceedings in the fifteenth century; a copy of one of them may sometimes, but rarely, be met with in the booksellers' shops in Florence, but of the other we know only of one copy, which is in the possession of Count Carlo Capponi. This last one is evidently that got up in haste by the Signory, and afterwards withdrawn by public proclamation. At the beginning of it is written: 'This is the examination and trial of Frate Hieronymus of Ferrara Savonarola, for which he was brought before respectable and prudent men, commissioners and examiners of the Florentine Signory, solemnly elected and deputed by a commission from the Holy Apostolic See.' The other copy is inscribed thus:—'by respectable and prudent men, commissioners and examiners of the illustrious Florentine Signory.' It is now known that the Signory wished to make over the whole charge and responsibility of the proceedings to the Pope, and it is expressly affirmed in a letter to the King of France, that Romolino and Turriano had, by the authority of the Pope, pronounced his sentence, and that the Signory were in no degree responsible. '*Quo fit, ut nec mortis ejus nos auctores fuerimus,*' &c. See Padre Marchese, Doc. xli. The same is said in the sentence of the Otto. That perhaps is the reason why we find in the copy printed by the Signory, the phrase *by commission from the Holy Apostolic See*, which we do not find in the other. For the same reason, also, the letter of the Pope to Francesco di Puglia, and the other to the Franciscans, are given in the printed copy. By whom the second edition was made it is difficult to say; but we find in Burlamacchi, p. 148, the

Apart from our wish that Savonarola had shown more firmness, the result was clear, that his answers, extorted by torture, altered in the first minutes, again altered in the signed copy, and, for the fourth time, in that which was printed, established his innocence.*

The Signory held several meetings to obtain advice,† and concluded with the desperate expedient of subjecting Savonarola to a second examination. It began on the 21st of April, and was conducted with great haste. He was interrogated both morning and evening, and the Notary made entire changes in his answers; but they

following passage: ‘Nevertheless this process (that which was falsified) is of very little importance, and contains nothing of any moment. They were, therefore, unwilling to publish it, but drew up another edition that had a somewhat better character. But God permitted the former to be divulged; for Ceccone had sent a copy of it to a friend, who had promised not to show it to anyone; he afterwards deceived him by printing it, and so it got out.’ This anecdote, rightly considered, explains many things; it tells the fact of the second examination the Signory had ordered, being dissatisfied with the first, and confirms the fact of the second edition of the minutes of the first examination.

* We must again refer the readers to the sixth *Giornata* of Violi, and to the *Vulnera Diligentis*, lib. ii. cap. 17, entitled, *Del numero dei vari processi*; and cap. 18, entitled, *Delle contradizioni et falsità che sono nel processo stato stampato*. From what Frà Benedetto tells us, it is clear the first written minutes, in which the answers of Savonarola were falsified, were very different from the copy that was deposited in the Palazzo; and what he says is confirmed by Violi, who points out many of the differences between the two. That second copy, moreover, was again different from that which was printed, and Benedetto notices some of the differences he had observed between the copy in the Palazzo and the printed one; as, for example, the following sentence, which is entirely omitted in the latter: ‘My citizens,—when you find these my enemies not giving credit to the things I have said, and have committed errors, reprove them severely, as enemies to the faith in Christ.’ He observes also, that the signatures of Savonarola and the witnesses have been altered, but does not say how or where; so that what he remarks on this subject is somewhat obscure; but he several times repeats, that every genuine affirmation of Savonarola tends to his honour. He does not, however, tell us whether the signature of the Friar which he saw was really in his own hand-writing, and we have now no means of clearing up this point, for the copy deposited in the Palazzo was burned at the time of the siege of Florence, as injurious to the memory of Savonarola.—Varchi, *Storia di Firenze*, ediz. Arbib, vol. ii. p. 365.

† See the already quoted *Frammenti di Pratiche*, in the *Archivio delle Riformazioni*.

had soon to give this up, seeing that nothing was likely to come of it than a still greater degree of odium to themselves.* They adhered, therefore, to the first examination.

It was necessary, according to the customs of the Republic, that the depositions should be read in the hall of the Consiglio Maggiore, in the presence of the whole people and of the accused person. But instead of this, the Signory only caused them to be read by the Secretary of the Otto, who declared to the assembled people that Savonarola did not wish to be present, as he was afraid of being stoned.† No credit was given to that statement, and it only served to increase the charge against the Signory, who were so dissatisfied with the examinations and proceedings, that instead of giving Ceccone the promised 400 ducats, they would not give him more than thirty,‡ as he had failed to fulfil any of his engagements.

* The copy of the second examination we were the first to discover.

† Nardi is mistaken in saying that the minutes of the examinations were read, including the second ordered by the Signory, and that which took place by order of the Apostolic Commissioners much later; for the latter had no legal validity, and could not have been read in the hall of the Consiglio Maggiore. We are more and more convinced that it was only the minutes of the first examination which were read there, for the speech which Nardi puts in the mouth of the secretary of the Otto, after the reading, is the same as that given at the end of the printed copy. And we must again repeat, that although Nardi is a most minute and conscientious writer, he is by no means correct and precise in what he says of those examinations, so that he appears to have written from memory, long after the occurrence of the facts.

‡ Burlamacchi. Frà Benedetto says that he got 33.

CHAPTER X.

EXAMINATIONS OF FRÀ DOMENICO, OF FRÀ SALVESTRO, AND OF SEVERAL OF THE FRIENDS OF THE CONVENT OF ST. MARK—THE POPE'S COMMISSIONERS ARRIVE AND SUBJECT SAVONAROLA TO MORE SEVERE TORTURE—HIS LAST WRITINGS, COMPOSED IN HIS PRISON.

THE Signory could not be less disappointed by the result of the examinations of the two other friars. Domenico da Pescia, under torture, rose superior to himself. They endeavoured to make him believe that Savonarola had retracted everything; they subjected him to the torture of the rope, and to the still more cruel torments of the boot;* but all in vain; he remained unshaken and calm, like one of the martyrs of the primitive Church. They then resolved to make a virtue of necessity; they allowed him to make his confession in his own handwriting, and were even thinking of publishing it without any alterations, to obtain the name of honest judges, and thus create some belief in the falsified minutes of Savonarola's examination.† But their courage was not equal to such a step. When they read Domenico's confession, they could not refrain from making alterations in it, which, although not essential, gave a certain colouring, and deprived it of that impression of heroism which was conspicuous in every sentence. They added, from their own invention,

* Violi mentions this, as do also Barsanti and Padre Marchese.

† Frà Benedetto, *Vulnera Diligentis*.

names of friends of the convent, Domenico refusing to give up any; and, after all, they did not venture to publish the confession, but circulated it in manuscript only.

When the two copies of the minutes are compared, there is found in that which was garbled by the Signory more of order and grammatical correctness, neither of which, indeed, exist in the genuine copy, which, on the contrary, is characterised by an honest natural eloquence, which art cannot produce, but which springs spontaneously from the heart of a generous man. It is not possible to read it without deep emotion; it takes us beside the instrument of torture; we seem to see the cruel writhing of his limbs, and to hear the grating of his bones; we listen to the weak, exhausted voice, still sublime, of the heroic Friar, on the very verge of death, with the angelic smile of a martyr, and his very pain exciting him to praise the name of his Lord.*

The confession began with these words: 'My God and Lord Jesus Christ knows that I, Frà Domenico, for his sake, am not false in any of the things I now write.' He affirmed that he and Savonarola were all along opposed to having recourse to arms, and to offering any resistance in the convent. But when he comes to speak of the ordeal by fire, he says, 'I went forth with the utmost deliberation, to pass through the fire, and never thought of any objection being made to my taking the Sacrament with me. If, then, any scandal arose, God, by whose will I was moved when I under-

* Whoever reads the two copies of the confession can easily distinguish the true copy from the false. If, moreover, other authority were required, we have the very reliable one of Frà Benedetto, who in the third book of the *Vulnera Diligentis*, speaks continually of the true copy; and in order to distinguish it from any other, he quotes the first and the last sentences, together with a very long passage which is entirely omitted in the altered copy. See lib. iii. caps. 3, 9, Riccardian library, cod. 2985.

took to submit to the ordeal, will reward me for it, since I have from that cause incurred so much reproach and persecution.' And on that day he concluded with saying to the examiners, 'I beg you not to interpret my words sophistically, but plainly, and according to the intention with which they were written.*

On the 16th of April, after the examiners had, by cunning and cruelty, tried to persuade him that Savonarola had retracted,† they asked him to write down what he thought of the Friar. He at once complied, saying, 'From a certain impression on my mind, I have ever firmly believed, and nothing has ever caused me to think otherwise, and I do now believe, in all the prophecies of Savonarola.' And after enumerating them, he continued, 'I have kept steadfastly to that faith, nor on that account ought your Excellencies to be offended, for this belief of mine is no offence so far as I am myself concerned, nor does it do any injury to the city; in such matters every one is free to believe as he will.' He added, that Savonarola had never suggested to him what he should preach, but left him to be inspired by God. He concluded as follows:—'There is nothing more on my mind; if there be anything else you wish to know from me, ask me, like good confessors, and I will do my best to satisfy you. But give credit to all I say, as you certainly may; for I have always had a tender conscience; I know full well that to utter a falsehood in the presence of a judge, or to conceal that which should be made known, is a sin. I am quite ready to speak as openly as if I were at the point of death, which may very easily be the case if you continue to torture me, for I am already utterly broken down. My arms are rendered useless, especially this left arm, by the injuries it has already twice suffered.

* See the process, which, in this part, has no date.

† This appears in the minutes of the examination of Domenico.

I pray you, therefore, be merciful, and believe in the simple truth I have written.'

But the judges pressed him with still greater severity, and he replied, 'I know no more; for my whole concern has been to lead a life of virtue, and with Jesus Christ, the King of Florence. If you do not believe me, you may subject me again to the rope, but you will get nothing more out of me, for I have no more to give, and you will endanger my life.' His appeal was in vain, and he was again put to the torture, and with increased cruelty. They then gave him a pen, while he was still in a state of exhaustion, and with a trembling hand but with unabated firmness of mind, he wrote the last and memorable words of his confession. 'God's will be done! I never perceived, nor ever had the slightest suspicion that Father Hieronymo either deceived or feigned; but, on the contrary, he was ever most upright, and I have always considered him a man of a rare nature. Having the greatest reverence for him, I hoped, through him, to have the grace of God to enable me to do some good to the souls of men; and, looking upon him as a man of God, I obeyed him with singleness of heart, and with all anxiety, as his subject. I have sometimes said to the friars from the pulpit, that if I ever had discovered the slightest error or deception in him I would have laid it open and made it publicly known. And it is most certain that I have sometimes declared to himself that which I would have done, and which I would now do, did I know that there was any duplicity in him. *Finis. In simplicitate cordis mei lætus obtuli universa.*'

Matters proceeded very differently with Frà Salvestro. Nervous and sickly, subject to visions and extraordinary somnambulism, which he believed to be inspiration, weak in character, and disposed to believe and disbelieve with equal facility, he was constantly walking up and

down the cloisters, disputing in the midst of a group of the citizens. He had been reprovèd on many occasions by Savonarola; but, as many sought him, he fell again into the same errors. Whether it arose from a difficulty of finding opportunities of speaking with Savonarola, who had entire trust in the sincerity of Salvestro, or from the fame of his visions, which were widely known, or from a degree of religious enthusiasm in his discourse,—certain it is, that such men as Francesco Valori and Piero Capponi chose him as their confessor, and kept up a constant correspondence with him.*

But when the hour of danger arrived, he made a wretched appearance. We have seen that, on the day of the tumult in the convent, he concealed himself; nor did he come out of his hiding-place until Frà Malatesta pointed it out to the officers of the magistrates. When he was submitted to examination, on the 25th of April, his whole thoughts were how he should save his life, although at the expense of his master's innocence and his own dignity. In the minutes of his examination Ceccone also made several alterations.† But the substance and general character of his depositions are very clear, and were such that his most devoted friends could not defend. It is, however, remarkable that, quite contrary to his intention, he supplied new and most solid arguments for demonstrating Savonarola's innocence. He made out a long list of the names of those who were in the habit of frequenting the convent; he abjured the doctrine, and tried in every way to blacken the character of his master; confessing, however, that Savonarola never allowed himself to be swayed by party considerations, nor ever brought the affairs of State

* See the brief; the examinations of the accused; Burlamacchi; Machiavelli, *Frammenti Storici*, &c.

† Frà Benedetto speaks of some alterations made in the minutes of the examination of Frà Salvestro. See *Vulnera Diligentis*, lib. ii. and iii., the chapters where he treats of the examinations.

into the convent. He thus concluded: 'As to what I think of the proceedings of Frà Girolamo, I can affirm that it has happened, at least twenty or thirty times, that when he was going to preach he came to me a short time before his sermon and said to me—I can do nothing but preach; pray to God for me; for I believe that God has forsaken me because of my sins. He said that he should like to confess to me—and he did so; nevertheless, he afterwards delivered a most beautiful discourse. The last time he did this was on a Saturday; and next day, the last Sunday of last Lent, he preached in St. Mark's. Yet, I must add, that he has deceived us.' The last sentence was certainly added by Ceccone; but all these words of Salvestro prove the entire faith which Savonarola had in the sincerity and goodness of a disciple who now so basely betrayed him, and who did all he could, but in vain, to blacken the character of his master.

Examinations followed of several of the friars of St. Mark's, and of a few of the citizens, intimate friends of Savonarola, who had been found in the convent on the day of the tumult. They were closely interrogated as to what took place on that day, as to the introduction of arms, and so forth. The examiners learned several particulars respecting those matters, but absolutely nothing that in any way implicated Savonarola, whose innocence came out more and more clearly. All affirmed that he was a man wholly devoted to the contemplation of heavenly things, who never concerned himself with the affairs of State. Such, they said, was the respect and the veneration in which he was held, that no one ever ventured to enter his cell, from the fear of disturbing him in the meditations in which he was continually absorbed.*

* Andrea Cambini, in his examination, says that even Valori would not have dared to enter the cell when Savonarola was engaged in study.

When, however, the falsified minutes were shown to these persons—when it was endeavoured to persuade them that Savonarola had abjured his prophecies and visions—all did not remain firm in their faith. The friars, especially, broke out at once into expressions of anger and scorn. Frà Roberto da Gagliano, although he had been one of those most affectionately attached to Savonarola and his two companions, implored the Signory that, under no circumstances, they should be sent back to the convent. But, amid all his anger and all his indignation, he could not conceal the regard and veneration he had for the Friar; so that his accusations ended in a defence. ‘I know,’ he said, ‘that both on scientific and on theological grounds, his doctrine is sound, and not heretical.’ . . . ‘I never could see anything wrong in him, but invariably signs of devotion, of holiness, humility, and habits of prayer, righteous discourse, the best manners and examples, admirable conversation, and a doctrine sound, firm, solid. But as he has, with so much subtlety, feigned and deceived, I thank God and the Signory for having disclosed it to us; and we pray that you will continue in the good work you have begun until its completion.’

The friars of St. Mark made a sad figure also on this occasion. But it must be taken into account that their position was a very difficult one, and that their faith had been put to a severe trial. Unfortunately for many of them, the doctrine they professed consisted chiefly in visions and prophecies; they had therefore blindly hoped, expected, and anxiously wished for the miracle of the ordeal; and when they saw the whole vanish, they were left as men who were lost. We must admit that such a trial was indeed hard and difficult to bear, when we see that even Frà Benedetto, the faithful friend, the heroic follower, the indefatigable defender of Savonarola, was, on that day, so overcome by doubt

and, to use an expression of his own, *like a thrush that had been struck down*, that he went in retirement to Viterbo.* Soon, however, the calm he found there restored him to reason, and he came back to Florence; and, having enquired minutely into the facts, having sought for and found the true documents, and the reliable witnesses, he returned with more confidence than ever to his former faith, in which he continued to the day of his death.† But all did not show the same generous constancy, and as early as the 21st of April the friars of St. Mark addressed a letter to Borgia which will ever remain an indelible stain upon their reputation.

They threw themselves at the feet of the Holy Father, and sought to throw the whole blame of their conduct upon Savonarola. It seemed, however, as if all his accusers must turn into his defenders, for this very letter is an eulogium upon him. ‘Not only we,’ they said, ‘but men of far greater genius, were deceived by the astuteness of Frà Girolamo. The subtlety of his doctrine, the rectitude of his whole life, the sanctity of his habits, the feigned devotion, the success that attended his efforts to reclaim the city from vicious courses, from usury and crimes of every kind, the many events by which, beyond all human imagination, his prophecies were fulfilled, were altogether of such and so great a nature that had he not himself retracted, saying that his words did not come from God, we never could have withheld our belief in them. So entire was our faith in him, that we were all ready to offer up our bodies at the stake in support of his doctrine.’ They then asked for absolution from the excommunication they had brought upon themselves from having been his followers, and from having taken up arms, as some of them

* *Cedrus Libani*.

† *Ibidem*. See also the particulars of the life of Frà Benedetto given by Padre Marchese in his *Scritti Vari*.

had done, on the day of the tumult. It is most singular that in the continuation of their letter these friars prayed the Holy Father that he would maintain their separation from the Lombard friars, that same separation which Savonarola had so strenuously contended for, and which had been held out by the Pope as the ground of the excommunication issued against him and his convent. These friars now made a similar petition, adducing the same reasons which had been urged by Savonarola in that letter which roused the great anger of the Pope. They concluded thus :—‘ Your Holiness has now Frà Girolamo in your power, the fomentor and leader of every error ; may he undergo condign punishment, if such can be found for so great wickedness ; we, the lost sheep, turn again to the true shepherd.’ *

This letter was taken to Rome by two of the friars, who were warmly recommended by the Signory.† The Pope replied to it on the 14th of May, praising their repentance, granted the absolution asked, and promised to take into mature consideration that separation which had already been so often, in turns, condemned and conceded.‡ The Signory had received a brief of eulogium and congratulation, dated the 17th of May,§ and another brief was addressed to the Archbishop and Chapter of the Duomo, giving them power to grant absolution for any crime which had for its object the ruin of Savonarola, even if it amounted to murder ; very many availed themselves of this absolution.||

All this time there was a most active correspondence between the Republic and the Pope. The Holy Father entreated, demanded, and declared it to be his will, that

* See Document xviii. in Perrens.

† Padre Marchese, doc. xxx.

‡ Perrens, doc. xix.

§ Marchese, doc. xxx. and following ; Nardi, pp. 144, 145.

|| Ibidem.

after Savonarola had been examined and put to the torture, he should be delivered up alive into his hands; to this the Signory replied, that the demand could not be granted without greatly compromising the dignity of the Republic. They, however, continued their correspondence, urging the Holy Father again and again to agree to the tax of a tenth on church property, as proposed and warmly supported by Savonarola, and the source of many accusations against him. This proceeding of the Signory was approved and strongly insisted upon at a public meeting. It seemed that on every side there was a disposition to make a traffic of the life of the unhappy Friar; to obtain in exchange for it these same concessions for which he had struggled, and by which he was now doomed to suffer martyrdom.*

The time was near at hand for the election of a new Signory, and meetings were held daily. On April 27 and 28 the Signory asked for opinions as to the answer to be returned to the Pope; in what way money was to be raised; and how the city was to be kept quiet. Vespucci, whose opinion always prevailed on such occasions, advised temporising with Rome, and that the examinations of the three friars should be prolonged, so that the decision upon their fate might rest with the new Signory; and to show indulgence to the rest of

* Documents of Padre Marchese. Many were the counsels of Savonarola which they were willing to adopt, at the very time they were seeking his death, or soon after it. One of them was the appointment of the Gonfaloniere for life; another was a reform in the administration of justice. Savonarola had said 'Establish a *ruota*, or tribunal of reputable citizens, to be well paid, that they may not be open to bribery; and if the finances will not allow that, appoint some trustworthy foreigner as a judge of appeal.' On May 20, at the very time when the Friar was going to be again subjected to torture, a decree was passed abolishing the Bargello (the sheriff) and appointing the Capitano del Popolo and the Potestà; in this way creating the functionary whom Savonarola had designated, 'a foreign judge of appeal.' See the decree in the *Archivio delle Riformazioni*. Not long after, the offices of Capitano del Popolo and Potestà were abolished, and a new decree was passed, establishing the *ruota*, as Savonarola had advised.

the accused persons : as to the finances and the maintenance of order in the city, he thought that they should be left entirely to the discretion of the existing Signory.* His advice was adopted ; a stop was put to the examination of all except the three friars ; eighteen citizens were condemned in penalties or imprisonment, and loss of eligibility to hold a public office for some years.† An amnesty was granted to many ; no enquiry was made into the cases of those who had fought with the Piagnoni, or of those who had killed Valori and his family.‡ In order to make a display of a love of liberty and of hatred of the Medici, the sentence of banishment for rebellion passed on Alessandro and Lamberto del' Antella, who had afterwards divulged the conspiracy of Piero de' Medici, was repealed.§

The time had now arrived to take such measures as would make it certain that in the approaching election the new Signory should be wholly composed of enemies of Savonarola ; for otherwise the laws and public faith would have been violated to no purpose, and all his torments and lacerations would have been equally fruitless. Were Piagnoni to be chosen, Savonarola would not only be acquitted but avenged, and the infamy of his examinations would be laid open to the whole world. All this, however, was easily prevented. On the day on which the Consiglio Maggiore met for the election of the magistrates, not less than two hundred citizens

* *Frammenti di Pratiche.*

† See in the *Archivio delle Riformagioni* the deliberations of April 30, 1498.

‡ Nardi, *Storia di Firenze.*

§ Decree of April 23, 1498. In the court of the Ottanta there were sixty black beans against twenty-three whites;¹ and in the Consiglio Maggiore 706 blacks against 305 whites. It is known that the white beans rejected.

¹ The number of eighty was always increased not only by the attendance of the Signory, but very often by that of other magistrates, and of citizens as *Arroti*.—Recent note by the Author.

belonging to the popular party were excluded, by a new and most flagitious proceeding.* By this manœuvre, Vieri de' Medici was chosen Gonfaloniere di Giustizia, a man worthy of the name he bore,† and the new Signory was in all respects similar to the preceding. The new magistrates found the work already marked out for them, and they had nothing else to do but to continue in the same course, and seal with blood the crime which had already in great part been perpetrated.

The Signory had scarcely entered upon their office when they assembled a meeting, without delay, on May 5, to take counsel how they should proceed. Some answered that it was necessary to impress upon the Pope that the sentence ought to be carried into execution in the place where the crime was committed, but that, if it should be necessary to give way, an endeavour should be made, by a new examination, to extort from the friars something more explicit. Girolamo Rucellai supported that opinion, and, insisting upon the necessity of a new examination, he concluded: 'And there is the more reason for this, as we have heard that the new instrument of torture has just arrived.'‡ He referred probably to some one by which any confession that might be wished for could be extorted. Piero Popoleschi then rose to speak in the name of the Dieci, and what he said was calculated to have great weight, because having been the Gonfaloniere di Giustizia of the preceding Signory, he had arranged and conducted the proceedings against Savonarola. He insisted on the necessity of a communication to Rome,

* Nardi, *Storia di Firenze*.

† There were four of the same name, and one of them was a follower of Savonarola. The sequel of our narrative will show of what sort of complexion he was of whom we are now speaking.

‡ The words of the record of this meeting are, 'It would be well to examine them anew, as it is believed that there is a new torture, so that by his going to Rome everything would be brought out that his body contains.' *Archivio dell Reformagioni ; Frammenti di Pratiche*.

to show that the sentence ought to be carried into execution in Florence, where there were still many who persisted in their devotion to the Friar; and that if the Pope required to know more he might send his own commissioners to examine the friars anew. In the meantime it would be proper not to hesitate to ask for a license to have them degraded, so that they might be handed over to the secular power. But in speaking of the new examination which some in the meeting were desirous should take place, he unconsciously made a singular confession, for he said:—‘As to ‘a new examination, the Signory of the Dieci are of ‘opinion that we ought to rest satisfied with that which ‘has already taken place, for the sake of the peace of ‘the city, for should anything be retracted, it might ‘give rise to great scandal.’* Popoleschi was thus against any new examination, fearing that the falsifications of the first might be discovered, and in this way the whole proceeding be compromised. He had no fear as to the Pope’s commissioners; he knew that they would be adepts in that kind of work, and with the assistance of Ceccone they could not fail to accomplish their object.

The Signory being persuaded by what Popoleschi advised, wrote to the Pope,† who at length yielded to their wishes, and on the 1st of May addressed a brief to Bishop Paganotti, in Florence, to inform him of the speedy arrival of two apostolic commissioners, ‘with power to enquire into the errors and iniquitous crimes of these three friars, sons of perdition.’ Borgia knew

* *Frammenti di Pratiche*, Archivio delle Riformagioni.

† Padre Marchese, Doc. xxxvi. vii. We have there the letter of the Signory to their ambassador at Rome, written the same day, May 5, and the letter of the 6th to the Pope, which begins, ‘As to the torturing him on the following days,’ &c. Another proof, were not an infinite number already existing, that Savonarola was subjected to torture, not only on April 19, but on the last days of his existence.

that bishop to be a friend and disciple of Savonarola, and with a refinement of cruelty imposed upon him the task of degrading the Friar with his own hands, and of consigning him to the secular power.*

The Pope's commissioners did not arrive till the 19th of May, and thus Savonarola, who had been a close prisoner in the Alberghettino since the 19th of April, had a month of solitude and repose, during which his strength might have been somewhat restored. In the first days of his examination he was lacerated and weakened to such a degree that he could not move his arms, but afterwards the right arm was less injured, because it was purposely spared in the torture, so that in accordance with the laws, he might sign his confession with his own hand. He thus was able to take up the pen in his prison, and what he wrote in these solemn moments deserves to be held in special consideration.

The reader will not expect that Savonarola would say anything against his judges, or lament over his tortures, or defend himself: he had then no longer any hope in this world; his thoughts were directed solely to God; he expounds and comments upon the psalm—*In te Domine speravi*.† ‘Whither shall I, poor sinner, turn me?—to the Lord, whose mercy is infinite. No one should glory in himself; all the saints say, not to us, but to the Lord glory belongs. They were not saved by their merits or their works; but by the goodness and the grace of God; therefore no one can have glory in himself.’

‘O Lord! a thousand times hast Thou wiped out my iniquity, and yet a thousand times have I again fallen into it. But when Thy spirit shall descend upon me, when Christ shall live within me, then I shall feel

* Perrens, doc. xix.; Nardi, Burlamacchi, Marchese, &c.

† ‘In thee, O Lord, do I put my trust; let me never be ashamed: deliver me in Thy righteousness.’—Psalm xxxi. 1.—Tr.

secure. Confirm me, then, O Lord, in Thy spirit, for then only shall I be able to instruct the wicked in Thy ways. If Thou hadst desired the sacrifice of my body I would have given it, but Thou asked not for burnt offerings, but the spirit. Let, then, a heart that has repented of its sins be offered up to Thee, and more Thou wilt not require.' He then turned to the thought never absent from his mind—the renovation of the Church. 'I fervently pray that all men may be saved, for the works of the just would greatly comfort me. I pray Thee, therefore, to turn Thine eyes towards Thy Church, where Thou wilt see how greatly unbelievers outnumber the Christians, and how everyone has made a god of his belly. Send forth Thy spirit, and renovate the face of the earth. Hell is becoming full and Thy Church empty. Arise, therefore, O Lord! why sleepest thou? Our sacrifices are not acceptable to Thee, for they are those of ceremony and not of justice. Where now is the glory of the Apostles—the strength of the martyrs—the simplicity of monks?' Continuing in this strain, he seemed to have forgotten his prison, and to believe that he was in the pulpit. Anyone reading that Meditation would almost think that he was reading one of Savonarola's most stirring sermons, so much did he continue equal to himself.* Up to this time we have seen that while in prison his prophesying and visions had disappeared; but now, in solitude, his mind again rose into a state of exaltation; his imagination was lighted up, and vanished visions reappeared to the fancy of the afflicted prisoner.

The second writing he composed at this time was a

* See his meditations on the 30th Psalm.¹ Audin de Rians, in his bibliography of the edition of the works of Savonarola that appeared in the fifteenth century enumerates five Italian and one Latin edition of this small work. The original was in Latin.

¹ The 31st in our translation.—Tr.

Meditation on the Miserere,* in which he paints the struggle in his heart between sorrow and hope.† They are not abstract and allegorical existences; but he hears the sounds of chains and the voices of angels. Heaven opens before his eyes. ‘Sorrow has pitched his camp ‘around me, and has encompassed me with a strong and ‘numerous army; he has taken full possession of my ‘heart, and never ceases, night nor day, to attack me ‘with the clang of arms. My friends fight under his ‘standard and have become my enemies; all that I see ‘and all that I hear bring his banners before me.’ ‘Thus, like unto those who are in a state of fever, to whom everything sweet is bitter, so all things are converted by me into affliction and bitterness. But I will turn me to Heavenly things, and Hope will come to my rescue. Sorrow cannot endure her aspect. Now let the world oppress me as it will, let mine enemies rise up against me, I fear them not, as one whose whole hope is in the Lord. It may be that Thou wilt not grant my prayer that I may be liberated from temporal anguish: for such a measure of grace would not help the soul, which virtue alone inspires with courage in the days of tribulation. I shall then, for a time, be overcome by men; they will have strength and power against me; but Thou wilt not suffer that I shall be for ever cast down.’ Then follows a passage deserving of special notice, because it is chiefly upon that and another, identical with it in this Meditation, that Protestants endeavour to maintain that Savonarola was a martyr of their Church.

‘I shall have hope, then, in the Lord, and I shall, ere long, be freed from all tribulation. And by what merits? Not truly by my own, but by Thine, O Lord.

* The 51st Psalm in our translation.—Tr.

† Audin mentions eight Latin editions, five Italian, and one German, all of the 16th century. The original was in Latin.

I do not rely upon my own justification, but on Thy mercy. The Pharisees gloried in their justification; but they had it not from God; it comes from grace alone; and no one will be justified before God, solely by having fulfilled the works of the law.' Here the phantom Sorrow comes forward with such a mingled sound of arms and of trumpets that Savonarola says: ' . . . Scarcely can I bear myself up and save myself from falling to the ground; and I should then have been bound by his chains, and led into his domain, if Hope, bright and radiant with heavenly splendour, had not come up to me, and smiling said—O soldier of Christ! is this thy courage in the day of battle? hast thou faith, or hast thou not? Yes, I have faith. Then know that it is a great measure of grace from God: for faith is His gift, and comes not from our own works, in which let no man glory.'

From this it is easy to come to the conclusion that Savonarola meant to maintain that justification comes from faith and the merits of Jesus Christ, without our good works—a theory which is the foundation of the doctrine of the Reformation. But, before we pronounce an opinion on this matter, it is necessary to bear in mind that salvation comes to both Catholic and Protestant through faith derived from grace. The difference is solely in this: that the Catholic believes that human free-will contributes to salvation, and that he strives by his works to receive grace; while, in the belief of the Calvinistic Protestant, man is a mere instrument in the hands of the Lord, and that his will can in no way contribute to his salvation. In that view it is easy to comprehend how easily every Catholic writer may be called a Protestant, who insists upon the omnipotence of faith, or the necessity of grace, or the insufficiency of works and of our own merits. But it is only by penetrating to the inmost sense of a doctrine, and studying

it as a whole, that we can form a true judgement of it. A very slight acquaintance with the writings of Savonarola will convince anyone of the very great importance he attached to the free-will of man, and that he considers it indispensable that we should prepare and dispose ourselves for the reception of grace. It can be no matter of wonder that Savonarola, shut up in his prison, and scarcely able to move, abandoned and betrayed by man, should not here dwell upon free-will, but should have placed his whole trust in the Lord. But whoever will attentively read the whole of this 'Meditation' will certainly not be misled as to the true nature of his doctrine.

'Sorrow'—he continues to say—"assails me, saying, Dost thou not see that thou callest on heaven and on earth, and that no one comes to help thee? Dost thou not perceive that death is thy only refuge? And then his whole army shouted; and I, weeping with pain, fell upon my face. And straightway Hope, all brightness and full of splendour, descended from heaven, touched me, and, raising me from the ground, said—"How long wilt thou be as a little child?" Let Sorrow, if he can, bring forth a sinner, however great, who, repenting, turns to God, is not accepted and justified?*" "Who "is he who will set bounds to the mercy of God, and "believes that he bears in his hands the waters of the "sea? Hast thou not heard how the Lord hath said—"Whatsoever sinner shall weep and pine for his sins, I "shall no more remember his iniquities?† The mercy "of God has no limits. Hast thou fallen? Arise, and "mercy will rescue thee. Hast thou been ruined? "Call, and mercy will come to thee." It is thus evident that he recognised the efficacy of man's works;

* This idea is in direct opposition to the doctrines of Luther and Calvin. Luther published his work *De servo arbitrio*, in which he contended against free-will: Calvin went further still with his idea on predestination.

† This again is a clear instance of Catholic doctrine.

and that doctrine is strictly Catholic. He thus concludes: 'I shall not put my trust in man, but in the Lord alone: and I shall make my vows before the whole people; for the death of saints is precious in the sight of the Lord. Should the whole army of my enemies be arrayed against me, my heart will not quake: for Thou art my refuge, and wilt lead me to my latter end.' Soon afterwards he was obliged to cease writing, for they deprived him of the use of paper.

These two Meditations, composed in prison, immediately acquired immense celebrity. The exposition of the 'Miserere' alone was dispersed in a short space of time by thirteen different editions, and obtained greater renown when Martin Luther published it in Germany, in the year 1573, with a preface, in which he declared Savonarola to have been the precursor of his doctrine. 'Although,' he said, 'some theological* mudstill adhered to the feet of that holy man, he nevertheless maintained justification by faith alone without works; and he was burned by the Pope. But lo! he lives in blessedness, and Christ canonised him by our means, although the Pope and the Papists might burst with rage.'† If, however, what we have already related be not a sufficient answer to that declaration of the great Reformer, the last acts and the last writings of Savonarola, composed in prison, would have removed all doubt, even from the mind of Martin Luther, could he have known them.

The gaoler, as was the case with all who came in contact with Savonarola, acquired a great veneration for him, and several times besought him to leave him some remembrance of him, to teach him how to lead a virtuous

* That is scholastic.

† 'Christus canonisirt ihm durch uns, sollten gleich die Päbste und Papisten mit einander darüber zerbersten. M. Luther, Vorrede über Savonarolas Auslegung des 51 Psalm. This preface, printed in the German edition of Luther's works, was also published in Latin.

life. Savonarola often excused himself, on account of the crippled state of his body, and from having been deprived of paper; but at length he complied with the request, and wrote on the blank leaf of a book—*A Rule for leading a virtuous Life*;* which, having been preserved with much devotion, came at length to be printed. ‘A virtuous life,’ he said, ‘depends entirely on grace; therefore, it is necessary to strengthen oneself to obtain it, and, when obtained, to exercise it. To enquire into our sins, to meditate on the vanity of the things of this world, lead us to grace; confession and communion dispose us for receiving it. It is certainly a gratuitous gift of God. But when we are strongly impressed with a disregard of the world, and are forcibly drawn towards spiritual things, we may then say, that if grace be not in us it is certainly near to us. Persevere, then, in a good life; in good works, in confession, and in all that brings us nearer to grace. That is the true and secure way for its exercise.’ To him, then, who does not see that this doctrine is purely and exclusively Catholic, and that Savonarola remained ever consistent to it to the last hour of his life, we can bring forward no more convincing arguments.

* *Regola del ben vivere cristiano, composta mentre era in carcere, &c.* Firenze, 1498, 1529; Venezia, 1547.

CHAPTER XI.

THE APOSTOLIC COMMISSIONERS SUBJECT SAVONAROLA AGAIN TO TORTURE, THE RESULT OF WHICH ANEW CONFIRMS HIS INNOCENCE—THE CONDEMNATION AND EXECUTION OF THE THREE FRIARS.

THE Pope's commissioners made a solemn entry into Florence on the 19th of May. They were Gioacchino Turriano, General of the Dominicans, and Francesco Romolino, Bishop of Ilerda, well-known afterwards as Cardinal Romolino. The low populace crowded round them, calling out, 'Death, death to the Friar!' to which Romolino assented with a smile, saying, 'Die he shall, at all events.' In fact, Girolamo Benivieni wrote from Rome 'that the two commissioners had been charged to get him put to death were he even a St. John the Baptist.* Nor did they make any secret of it, for Romolino had scarcely taken up his quarters adjoining the church of San Piero Scheraggio,† than, turning to the magistrates who were around him, he said, 'We shall make a famous blaze; I have the sentence already prepared.'‡

Next day, the 20th of May, the instruments of torture were made ready, and Savonarola was submitted to examination for the third time. There were present, besides the Pope's commissioners, Paolo Benini and Biagio di Giovanni, as representing the Gonfalonieri of the companies; Giovanni Canacci on the part of the twelve Buoni Uomini; Piero degli Alberti for the

* Burlamacchi, Barsanti, &c.

† Then a very old church, which occupied the site on which the Palazzo degli Uffizi was built.—*Tr.*

‡ Burlamacchi, Barsanti, &c.

Dieci; and Francesco Pucci for the Otto. As to Ceccone, not having given much satisfaction, they joined others along with him, hoping that rivalry might sharpen their wits to alter the answers more skilfully.* The Pope's commissioners held a consultation in order to find out how they might most effectually apply the torture, and how falsify the answers, so as to get all they wanted.

The unhappy Friar was tortured with great cruelty, † the first questions related to the General Council, and especially to those implicated in that scheme. Savonarola answered: 'I tell you distinctly that I received advice from no one in the affair of the Council, and it was only very lately that I spoke about it to any of the friars. I never had intercourse with any of the princes of Italy on the subject, having always looked upon them as my enemies. I hoped, however, that foreign princes would have favoured the proposal—because of the wicked conduct of the Court of Rome—and especially the King of England, from having heard he was a good man. As to the cardinals and prelates, I consider them all to be hostile to me.' On being interrogated as to his having disclosed what he had heard in the confessional, he instantly replied that neither he himself had ever asked questions on such matters, nor would his brethren have done so. Romolino, perceiving that he could get nothing out of him, began to threaten him furiously; but, finding threats useless, he immediately or-

* 'But even this small part of the original minute of the examination made by Romolino was written also by Ceccone and others (whom 'for brevity's sake I do not name), who were present at the examination.' Violi, *Giornate*, sixth. It is sometimes expressly stated in the minutes, that the secretary of Romolino also wrote down the answers; and Frà Benedetto in repeating a part of them says—'Let it not be irksome to you to read, I pray, the formal words written by Lodovico Menelli.' *Vulnera Diligentis*, lib. iii. cap. 3.

† The words *tortura* and *torturato* occur frequently at the margins of the minutes.

dered him to be stripped and tortured. Savonarola, then turning round, said aloud, 'Hear me! now, ye Florentine Signory; be ye my witnesses. If I must suffer, I will suffer for the truth; that which I have said I received from God.' He was then stripped and tortured, and these words were written down with little alteration, having been too clearly and firmly spoken.* Being most cruelly tortured, he again became delirious, and made incoherent answers, which the notary entirely altered. But so soon as they touched upon any important point of doctrine, neither torture nor alterations could avail. He was asked whether it had ever been his desire to make a division in the Church of Rome; and instantly waking out of delirium he answered, 'Never, except as to some ceremonies, with regard to which I laid some restrictions upon the mode of life of my brethren. It is, however, true, that I never had any fear of excommunication.†'

The proceedings recommenced next day, with a declaration confirming all that had occurred in the preceding examination. But it is devoid of all sense, and is valueless, as indeed are all the minutes of this examination, which were falsified from the outset, and

* The following is the passage in the *Vulnera Diligentis* of Frà Benedetto, which he gives from a copy in the handwriting of Cecccone, altered according to his custom:—'Being ordered to be stripped, he said, 'Hear me O God: thou hast detected me in sin.' He then fell down on his knees:—'I confess that I have denied Christ,—I have told lies. 'Florentine Signory, I denied through fear of torments. Be ye my 'witnesses. If I have to suffer I wish to suffer for the cause of truth—'that which I said I received from God. O God, forgive that I have 'denied Thee—I ask forgiveness. I have denied Thee—I have denied 'Thee through fear of torments.' He fell upon his knees and showed his left arm almost destroyed. 'Jesus help me, Thou hast this time detected 'me in sin.' The whole of this is referred to prophetic illumination. It is to be recollected that this third book of the *Vulnera Diligentis* is almost entirely a commentary upon Savonarola's third examination.

† In this, as well as in the minutes of the other examinations of Savonarola, we may consider as unquestionably true whatever is favourable to him, for it certainly would not be invented by the examiners or the notary.

death. The matter was soon settled. There was no question as to Savonarola and Salvestro; their death was resolved upon. But desiring to mitigate in some degree the strong impression which such a sentence might produce, Romolino proposed that Domenico's life should be spared. It was, however, observed that that friar would keep alive the whole doctrine of his master; upon which Romolino immediately replied, 'A vile friar more or less does not signify; let him die.'*

A very small meeting then took place to discuss the sentence. One only, a person of the name of Agnolo Pandolfini, rose to speak in favour of Savonarola, saying that it appeared to him to be a most serious crime to put to death a man possessed of such excellent qualities, such an one as could not be expected to be met with more than once in a century. 'He is a man,' he said, 'calculated not only to restore lost faith to the world, but to spread that knowledge with which he is so richly endowed. I advise you, therefore, to detain him in prison, if such be your desire, but to spare his life and give him the means of writing, that the world may not lose the fruits of his genius.' These words were very ill received by the meeting, and he was answered in a very different tone; that no one could place reliance on the next Signory, changed as it was every two months, that the Friar would most certainly be set at liberty, and again turn everything in the city into confusion. A dead enemy makes no more wars.† Such was the way in which they deliberated upon condemning a man who, after so many examinations and such prolonged torture, always came out innocent, as well as his two companions, who were equally free from guilt. The innocence of Domenico had been testified by the examiners themselves, and as to Salvestro, although he denied his

* Burlamacchi, Barsanti, &c.

† Ibidem.

master, he had not been found guilty of any crime for which he could legally be condemned.

That same evening the sentence of death was communicated to them, in order that they might prepare for their last hour.* Salvestro was greatly agitated; Domenico received it as if it had been an invitation to a feast. The announcement of his death filled his generous mind with enthusiasm: he immediately wrote a last farewell to his brethren, in a letter which we cannot refrain from laying before our readers.

‘*Most beloved brethren, and in the bowels of Jesus Christ. (Fratres dilectissimi et in visceribus Jesu Christi.)*† Since it is the will of God that we are to die for Him, all you who survive pray for us; keeping in mind my instructions, to continue united in charity, and constantly occupied in good works. Pray for us, especially on those solemn occasions when you are assembled in the choir; let not my body be buried in the church, but before the door, at one side, in some humble spot, and say the usual masses for me. And I in that place where I hope to have the power, will do the like for you.’

‘Kiss all the brethren in St. Mark’s for me, especially our most beloved of Fiesole, whose names, imprinted on my heart, I carry before God. Collect together all the works of Father Girolamo that are in my cell, get them bound, and place one copy in the library, and one in the refectory, to be read at the table; and let it be fixed to it by a chain, so that the lay brothers may sometimes read the works there.’‡ His last thoughts were directed to keeping alive the doctrine of his master. There are few examples in the world of so much faith and so much constancy.

* See Appendix Q.

† ‘For God is my record, how greatly I long after you all in the bowels of Jesus Christ.’—Epistle to the Philippians, i. 8.—TR.

‡ Burlamacchi has given this letter.

He was in a state of so much exaltation, so full of fervour, that no sooner were they told that their bodies would be burnt after death, than he entreated to be burnt alive, 'in order that he might endure that painful martyrdom for Jesus Christ's sake.'

When the messengers entered the prison of Savonarola, to communicate his sentence, they found him on his knees praying. When he heard the sad announcement, he gave no sign either of grief or joy, but continued earnest in his prayers. Shortly afterwards, they offered him supper, which he declined, saying that it was necessary for him to fortify his mind, not his body, to preserve equanimity and be well prepared for death. Soon afterwards a man entered the cell, clothed in black, having his face concealed under a black hood. It was Jacopo Niccolini, a *Battuto** of the Society of the Temple. That name is given to members of an association who voluntarily attend the last moments of condemned criminals. As soon as Niccolini asked Savonarola if he could gratify him by any service, he immediately requested him to endeavour to obtain leave from the Signory to have a short conversation with his two companions in the prison, to whom he wished to say a few words before dying. Niccolini went immediately, anxious to convey the message. A Benedictine monk then came to confess the prisoner, who, devoutly kneeling, fulfilled with much fervour that usual religious duty. The two other friars did the same.†

The Signory, in the meanwhile, held a consultation on the request brought to them by Niccolini: they always feared something extraordinary and unexpected from Savonarola; but the benevolent messenger begged them to consider that there was nothing to fear from

* They are called Battuti, from doing penance by corporal punishments—beating, from *battere*.—T.R.

† Burlamacchi.

a man who might be said to have already one foot in the grave, and that it was usual to comply with the last wishes of condemned persons. Leave was then granted for one hour's conversation in the hall of the Consiglio Maggiore.

• It would be difficult to describe adequately the state of mind in which the three friars met. It was the first time they had seen each other after forty days of imprisonment and tortures, during which time endeavours had been made to make each believe that the others had retracted, and after Frà Domenico and Frà Salvestro had seen, with their own eyes, the falsified depositions of Savonarola. But that was not a moment for declarations; they had now no other thought than how to prepare themselves as brothers to meet death with courage. The presence of Savonarola was alone sufficient for this; for no sooner was he seen by his companions than he resumed all his ascendant over them. At the first sight of that calm and stern countenance all doubt vanished from the minds of his disciples, and their former faith revived. There was not a moment to be lost; and turning quickly round to Domenico, he said—‘I know that you have asked to be burned alive; but that is wrong, it is not permitted for you to choose the manner of your death: do we yet know with what firmness we shall bear that to which we are condemned? That does not depend upon ourselves, but will be granted to us by the grace of God.’ Turning then to Salvestro with a more severe look, he said to him—‘I know that you have been desirous to declare your innocence before all the people: I admonish you to lay aside such a thought; and rather to follow the example of our Lord Jesus Christ, who even on the cross would not speak of His innocence.’ The two brethren, without uttering a word, fell on their knees at the feet of their superior, devoutly received his

blessing, and then returned each to his cell. Savonarola justly thought that any external manifestation, by word or deed, would render their death less solemn, less Christian; that in that last hour all their thoughts, their whole soul, should be turned to God: and thus the interview ended. Now that he had seen his disciples fully disposed to submission, all that remained for him was to prepare himself fitly for death.*

Night was already far advanced when he returned to his cell; he was so overpowered by fatigue and drowsiness, that, almost as a sign of affection and gratitude, he laid his head on the knees of the benevolent Niccolini, and soon fell into a short and light sleep, during which he seemed to dream and to smile, so great the serenity of his mind and such the expression of it. In waking, he appeared surprised at this himself. He tried to impress upon Niccolini the future calamities of Florence, and it is said that he added, 'Bear in mind that a time will come when you will have a Pope called Clement.' This prophecy was written down and held in remembrance in 1527, when, in the siege of Florence, it seemed to be fulfilled to the letter; the Piagnoni then brought it forward and proclaimed it to the astonished people; such, at least, is the story left by the old biographers:†

The three friars passed the whole night in prayer, and in the morning they again met, to receive the Sacrament. Leave had been given to Savonarola to administer it with his own hands; and, holding up the host, he pronounced over it the following prayer:

* Burlamacchi, Pico, Barsanti, Violi, Frà Benedetto, &c.

† Burlamacchi, Benivieni and many others, in enumerating the prophecies of Savonarola, dwell much on this one, and bring forward many particulars in support of the truth of their story. It is to be observed, however, that Burlamacchi died in 1519, from which we are forced to believe that his direct followers, and perhaps Padre Bottonio, had added that part of the narrative relating to the verification of the prophecies. See also on this subject, Padre Marchese, doc. xlii. and xliii.

‘Lord, I know that Thou art that perfect Trinity, invisible, distinct, in Father, Son, and Holy Ghost; I know that Thou art the eternal Word; that Thou didst descend into the bosom of Mary; that Thou didst ascend upon the cross to shed blood for our sins. I pray Thee that by that blood I may have remission of my sins, for which I implore thy forgiveness; for every offence or injury done to this city, and for every other sin of which I unconsciously may have been guilty.’ After this full and distinct declaration of faith, he himself took the communion, gave it to his disciples, and soon after, it was announced to them that they must go down to the Piazza.

Three tribunals had been erected on the ringhiera; that next the door of the Palazzo was assigned to the Bishop of Vasona (the before-mentioned Paganotti); the second, on the right of the Bishop, to the Pope’s commissioners; and the third, near the Marzocco, was occupied by the Gonfaloniere and the Otto. A scaffold had been erected, which occupied about a fourth of the Piazza between the ringhiera and the opposite Tetto dei Pisani. At the end of the scaffold a thick upright beam was fixed, having another beam near the top at right angles, which had been several times shortened to take away the appearance of a cross which it still retained. From this last beam hung three halters and three chains; by the first the three friars were to be put to death, and the chains were to be wound round their dead bodies, which were to continue suspended while the fire consumed them. At the foot of the upright beam was a large heap of combustible materials, from which the soldiers of the Signory had some difficulty to keep off the mob, which pressed round like waves of the sea. The multitude did not appear to be more numerous than it had been on the day of the fiery ordeal, but it wore a very different aspect. There was

a sad and solemn silence, a profound mortal trepidation even among those who had most desired to see that day. Various were the passions which prevailed in that universal agitation. There were brought together Bigi, Piagnoni, and Arrabbiati; here stood side by side those who had been the constant attendants on the sermons of the Friar, and those who, with stones and daggers, had attempted to take his life. Here, also, were many of those who, by their chronicles and diaries, have left eternal reminiscences of that most memorable day. It is more easy for the reader to imagine, than it would be for us to pourtray, the thoughts that must then have occupied their minds.

Around the inflammable heap a handful of persons had forced their way, who, by their curses, brutal cries, and the ferocious delight with which they seemed to have a foretaste of the approaching horrible spectacle, were more like wild beasts than human beings. Most of them had been let loose from the prisons to which they had been committed by former magistrates for their crimes, but were set free by the present Signory—solely because they professed to have a hatred for Savonarola and his followers.*

The three friars had by this time descended the stairs of the Palazzo, and they were met by one of the Dominican friars of Santa Maria Novella, the bearer of an order to take off their gowns, and leave them with their under-tunics only, their feet bare, and their hands tied. Savonarola was much moved by this unexpected proceeding; but, taking courage, he held his gown in his hand, and before giving it up, he said, ‘Holy dress, how much I longed to wear thee! thou wast granted to me by the grace of God, and to this day have I kept

* Nardi, Burlamacchi, Barsanti, Pico, and Frà Benedetto, in the *Cedrus Libani*.

thee spotless. I do not now leave thee; thou art taken from me.’*

They were now led up to the first tribunal, and were placed before the Bishop of Vasona. He obeyed the orders he had received from the Pope, but appeared much distressed; he had not courage to look upon the serene countenance of his master, who was more like the judge than the accused. He, however, commenced the terrible, the almost funereal ceremony. The three friars had their gowns again put on, in order that they might be first degraded and then have them again taken from them. Just before pronouncing their degradation, the Bishop had taken hold of Savonarola’s arm, but his voice faltered and his self-possession so forsook him, that, forgetting the usual form, in place of separating him solely from the Church militant, he said, ‘*I separate thee from the Church militant and triumphant*; when Savonarola, without being in the least discomposed, corrected him, saying, ‘Militant, not triumphant; that of yours is not.’* These words were pronounced with a firmness which vibrated through the minds of all the bystanders by whom they could be heard, and were ever after remembered.

Being thus degraded and unfrocked, and again in their under-tunics, they were delivered up to the secular arm, and by them taken before the apostolic commissioners, where they heard the sentence, declaring them to be schismatics and heretics. After this, Romolino, with cruel irony, absolved them from all their sins, and asked them if they accepted his absolution; to which they assented by an inclination of the head. Lastly, they came before the Otto, who, in compliance with custom, put their sentence to the vote, which passed

* These words are given by Burlamacchi and Pico, and also by Frà Benedetto, in the third part of the *Vulnera Diligentis*.

† Burlamacchi, p. 160; Nardi, 169; *Vulnera Diligentis*, parte iii.

without a dissentient voice. One of their body, however, Francesco Cini, was not present; he refused to be a party to so iniquitous a sentence.* It was forthwith read to the accused, and was in the following terms: 'The Gonfaloniere and the Otto, having duly weighed the examinations of the three friars, and the enormous crimes thereby proved—and especially taking into account the sentence of the Pope,† which delivers them over to a secular tribunal—have decided, that each of the three friars shall be hung from a gibbet, and afterwards burnt, when their souls shall have parted from their bodies.'

The friars, then, with a firm step and perfect tranquillity, advanced to the place of execution. Even Frà Salvestro, at that last hour, had recovered his courage, and, in the presence of death, appeared to have returned to be a true and worthy disciple of the Friar. Savonarola himself exhibited a superhuman strength of mind, for he never for a moment ceased to be in that calm state in which a Christian ought to die. While he and his companions were slowly led from the ringhiera to the gibbet, their limbs scarcely covered by their tunics, with bare feet and pinioned arms, the most furious of the rabble were allowed to come near and insult them in the most vile and offensive language. They continued firm and undisturbed under that severe martyrdom. One person, however, moved by compassion, came up and spoke some words of comfort, to whom Savonarola, with benignity replied—'In the last hour, God can alone bring comfort to mortal man.' A priest named Nerotto said to him—'In what state of mind do you endure this martyrdom?' To which he replied

* Burlamacchi, &c. The sentence itself thus began:—The Gonfaloniere di Giustizia and the Otto of the Florentine Republic, all except one, Francesco Cini, having met together in court, &c.

† It is remarkable that, after a political process, Savonarola should be condemned chiefly on the ground of a sentence by the Pope.

—‘The Lord has suffered as much for me. These were his last words.*

In this universal state of perturbation around them, Frà Domenico remained perfectly composed. He appeared to be like one

Ch’ a danza e non a morte andasse.†

(like one who was going to a dance rather than to death). He was in such a state of exaltation that he could hardly be refrained from chaunting the *Te Deum* aloud; but, on the earnest entreaties of the Battuto Niccolini, who was by his side, he desisted, and said to him—‘Accompany me in a low voice,’—and they then chaunted the entire hymn. He afterwards said—‘Remember, that the propheices of Savonarola must all be fulfilled, and that we die innocent!’‡

Frà Salvestro was the first who was desired to ascend the ladder. After the halter was fixed round his neck, and just before the fatal thrust was given, he exclaimed—‘Into Thy hands, O Lord, I commend my spirit!’ Shortly afterwards the hangman wound the chain round his body, and went to the other side of the beam to execute Frà Domenico; who ascended the ladder with a quick step, with a countenance radiant with hope—almost with joy—as if he were going direct to heaven.

When Savonarola had seen the death of his two companions, he was directed to take the vacant place between them. He was so absorbed with the thought of the life to come, that he appeared to have already left this earth. But when he reached the upper part of the ladder, he could not abstain from looking round on the multitude below, every one of whom seemed to be impatient for his death. Oh, how different from those days, when they hung upon his lips in a state of ecstasy

* Burlamacchi, &c.

† Leopardi.

‡ Burlamacchi, Barsanti, &c.

in Santa Maria del Fiore.* He saw at the foot of the beam some of the people with lighted torches in their hands, eager to light the fire. He then submitted his neck to the hangman.

There was, at that moment, silence—universal and terrible! A shudder of horror seemed to seize the multitude; the very monuments round the Piazza seemed to feel it! One voice was heard calling out—‘Prophet, now is the time to perform a miracle!’ All the incidents of that day seem to remain engraven on the memory, and to increase the feeling of mysterious terror which the death of their prophet must leave everlastingly on the minds of the people of Florence.

The executioner, thinking to please the unbridled populace, began to pass jokes upon the body before it had ceased to move, and in doing so nearly fell from the height. This disgusting scene moved the indignation and horror of all around, so much so that the magistrates sent him a severe reprimand. He then showed an extraordinary degree of activity, hoping that the fire would reach the unhappy Friar before life was quite extinct; the chain, however, slipped from his hand, and while he was trying to recover it, Savonarola had drawn his last breath. It was at ten o’clock in the morning of the 23rd of May, 1498. He died in the 45th year of his age.†

The executioner had scarcely come down from the ladder than the pile was set on fire; a man who had been standing from an early hour with a lighted torch, and had set the wood on fire, called out, ‘At length I am able to burn him who would have burned me.’‡ A blast of wind diverted the flames for some time from the three bodies, upon which many fell back in terror, ex-

* The name of the Cathedral or Duomo.

† Burlamacchi, Pico, Barsanti, Razzi, Frà Benedetto, Nardi, Guicciardini, Rinuccini, Cerretani, Parenti, Cambi, &c.

‡ This is mentioned by Nardi, who was present.

claiming, 'A miracle, a miracle!' But the wind soon ceased, the bodies of the three friars were enveloped in fire, and the people again closed round them. The flames had caught the cords by which the arms of Savonarola were pinioned, and the heat caused the hand to move; so that, in the eyes of the faithful, he seemed to raise his right hand in the midst of the mass of flame to bless the people who were burning him.

The Piagnoni pointed out that appearance one to another, and many of them were so much affected that without any consideration of the place where they were, or of the people by whom they were surrounded, they fell down on their knees, sobbing, and worshipped him whom they had already sanctified in their hearts. Women burst into floods of tears, young men were agitated by thinking on the unhappy state to which they were now reduced. But while on the one hand there was much lamentation, on the other there was much rejoicing. Arrabbiati, who were standing near the scaffold, bribed a set of children to make a noise, to dance, and to throw stones at the bodies, from which they every now and then raked out pieces which fell into the fire below. 'It rained blood and bowels,' says a writer who was present at that dreadful slaughter, which called forth shouts of rejoicing on one side, and on the other redoubled vain regrets and lamentation.*

Many of the boldest of the Piagnoni, among whom were ladies disguised as servants, made their way through the crowd of their enemies and reached the scaffold, where in the midst of the turmoil they secretly collected relics of their saints. They were soon, however, warned off by the soldiers of the Signory, who, fearing that the very ashes might be made to work some miracle, had them carted off and thrown over the Ponte Vecchio (the old bridge) into the Arno. This could not,

* *Frà Benedetto, Cedrus Libani.*

however, prevent many from collecting the remains left in the Piazza, or which had dropped by the way; and these relics, jealously preserved in valuable caskets, were worshipped, and for many years kept alive a faith in the Friar and devotion to his convent. Young Pico della Mirandola, although an eminent scholar, and learned in philosophy, believed that he had been able to fish up from the Arno a part of Savonarola's heart; and he asserted that he again and again had had experience of its miraculous effect in curing many diseases, in sending away malignant spirits, and so forth.

Medals were struck,* and likenesses engraved, which were sought for by all the devout, and kept in concealment; for, as the Arrabbiati were now complete masters of the city, no one ventured to resist their insolent fury.† Persecutions of the Piagnoni began, and seemed never to end. The convent of St. Mark's was shut up for two months, and the workshop in the Sapienza, where the novices were employed, was taken from them. The books of Lorenzo the Magnificent, for which they had paid the Republic 3,000‡ florins, were removed under various pretexts, and they were deprived of many rights and privileges they had long enjoyed.§ These privations were carried to an absurd extent, for the great bell of the convent, which went by the name of the Piagnona, after five deliberations|| of the Signory, was declared guilty of having tolled on the day of the tumult, was banished from Florence, carried out in a

* One of these is in the gallery of the Uffizi in Florence, and the frontispiece to this translation is from a photograph of it, taken by the kind permission of the Cavaliere Migliarini, the venerable conservator of the medals.—Tr.

† Nardi, *Storia di Firenze*; Gio. Cambi, *idem*.

‡ See the biographers quoted.

§ Such as celebrating mass in the Palazzo of the Signory, which was conferred on the friars of San Minato. The direction of the funds of the Buoni Uomini of San Martino, was also taken from them.

|| In the Archivio delle Riformagioni are many letters and deliberations on it.

cart, and whipped by the hangman.* Many of the friars were banished, among whom were the before-mentioned Mariano degli Ughi, Roberto da Gagliano, Aurelio Savonarola, the brother of Girolamo, and even Malatesta Sacromoro, whose treachery did not suffice to counterbalance the crime of his former friendship for his master.†

Many citizens were afterwards persecuted for having been followers of the Friar. Not a few were ordered to appear at Rome, but they very soon obtained absolution by bribing the Pope's commissioners.‡ No one, however, could escape from the continual insults of the unbridled rabble; obscene and offensive songs against the Piagnoni were heard in all parts, and they were constantly interrupted in their devotions. On Christmas eve, the Arrabbiati, to insult the memory of Savonarola, chased a miserable ass round the interior of the Duomo, and, beating the beast furiously, left it dead at the entrance.§ Nevertheless, for several years flowers were found to have been strewed, in the night of the 23rd of May, on the spot where the three friars had suffered martyrdom.|| His most constant followers set about writing, in secret, apologies and biographies; pictures of him were painted with religious allusions, his sermons were studied, and the fulfilment of his prophecies was looked forward to.

On the very day of the execution, the Dieci wrote to Rome and the other Courts of Italy, saying, 'These

* Padre Marchese, *Storia di San Marco*.

† See the deliberations of the Signory from May 28, to June 8, and those of June 29 and 30. See also Padre Marchese, *Storia di San Marco*.

‡ Nardi, *Storia di Firenze*.

§ Cambi, *Storia di Firenze*, vol. ii. p. 134, in the *Delizie degli Eru-diti Toscani*. By this proceeding, they probably meant that it was as well to have an ass in the Duomo as Savonarola, who was accustomed to preach on that day, and in killing the poor beast they represented the death of the Friar.—*Addition to Note by the Author*.

|| The *Osservatore Fiorentino* records this generally known fact.

friars have undergone condign punishment for their pestiferous seditions.' The Pope's commissioners were not satisfied with calling Savonarola a schismatic and a heretic, but charged him with those same crimes of which they themselves, even in the falsified minutes they drew up, had been forced to declare him innocent. 'We have found,' they thus wrote to the Pope, 'that he had disclosed things which he had heard in the confessional; that his object was to spread sedition in Florence, setting the citizens against one another. We found that friar, or, rather than call him either friar or man, we should say, that most vile, many-footed beast,* filled with all kinds of wickedness, had the audacity to call God to witness his sayings, and that if they were not true he would be willing to be hung and have his ashes scattered to the wind and the rain. We have done our best to bring about the fulfilment of every part of that foreboding.' †

The Signory received letters of congratulation and praise from Rome, Milan, and all quarters. But Louis XII., who had succeeded Charles VIII., wrote earnestly to the Signory, praying that the execution of the sentence might be suspended, for very grave reasons which he would give in another communication; ‡ but on the day that letter was sent off, the ashes of the three martyrs had been thrown into the Arno.

* *Omnipedum nequissimum.*

† This letter is published by Meyer, among his documents. He found it in the library of Count Boutourlin in Florence.

‡ Padre Marchese, doc. xl.

CONCLUSION.

AFTER the death of Savonarola things changed with such a degree of rapidity that the Arrabbiati had not time to consider in what manner they could restrict the government; but they soon became convinced that the only salvation for the Republic was to adopt the course which had been recommended by the Friar. Piero and Giuliano dei Medici were in fact already in the neighbourhood of Florence, supported by a powerful Venetian army. It became, therefore, absolutely necessary for the Arrabbiati to unite with the Piagnoni, in order to defend themselves against so many dangers and so many enemies.

By great good fortune, the Duke of Milan, from jealousy of the Venetians, came to their assistance to ward off the danger; but who could trust to his friendship—who could place any reliance in his fidelity? As to Alexander Borgia, he who had held out such great hopes, and had made so many promises, in order to get Savonarola put to death, no sooner was his object attained than he gave full sway to his unbridled passions. It seemed as if the death of the poor Friar had released both the Pope and his son, Duke Valentino, from all restraints upon their lusts and ambition. The Pope formed intimate alliances with Turks and Jews, a thing hitherto unheard of. He, in one year, set up twelve cardinal's hats for sale.* The history of the incests and

* Guicciardini, *Storia d'Italia*, ediz. Rosini, vol. iii. p. 15.

murders of the family of Borgia is too well known to render it necessary for us to enter into any detailed account of them here. The great object of the Pope was to form a State for his son in the Romagna; and so great was the ambition of Duke Valentino, that he contemplated extending his power over the whole of Italy, Tuscany being the first part he meant to seize upon.* With that view, he was always endeavouring to create new dangers to the Republic; at one time he caused Arezzo to rise against it; at another time he threatened to bring back Piero de' Medici; and he was continually ravaging their territory. The consequence was, that the Florentines were obliged to grant him an annual subsidy of 36,000 ducats, under the name of *condotta* (military pay); but even that did not restrain him from every now and then, under various pretexts, overrunning and laying waste their territory. Thus did Alexander Borgia fulfil those promises to the Republic by which they had been induced to murder Savonarola.

The Arrabbiati were at length convinced that to defend themselves against the Medici and Borgia, their only course was to cultivate the alliance with France, and unite in good faith with the Piagnoni. They thus completely adopted the line of policy which Savonarola had advised; and the consequence was, that their affairs got into order and their exertions were attended with a success far beyond what could have been anticipated.

The ambition of Louis XII. was, however, in no degree less than that of Charles VIII., and the misfortunes of Italy, predicted by Savonarola, very soon began to be felt. Who is unacquainted with the history of the wars between the Germans, the Spaniards, the Swiss, and the French, by which our country was made desolate for so many years, and laid waste by sackings, by the sword,

* Machiavelli, *Principe*, cap. viii.

and by conflagrations? So long as victory declared itself on the side of France, the Florentine Republic was able to survive in the general confusion; but when, by the death of the young Gaston de Foix, of imperishable memory, her good fortune began to change, the last hour of the Republic had struck. In September 1512, a Spanish army, without meeting any resistance, replaced the Medici in Florence.

War and misfortunes meanwhile spread over all Europe. The voice of Luther had already awakened schism in the Church; the stake and the gibbet, in place of extinguishing, served only to spread the new doctrine more widely; and then religious wars began. The Church, Italy, the whole world, was scourged; and in every new war, in every country laid waste, in every form of heresy, the Piagnoni saw the true fulfilment of Savonarola's prophecies. In all their misfortunes, under all their oppressions, they were steadfast to their ancient faith. When they saw Clement VII. ascend the pontifical throne, when the armies of Charles V. besieged and sacked the Eternal City, when churches were converted into stables for horses and into suttlng-houses for soldiers, then it seemed indeed, even to the most incredulous, that the predictions of the Friar had been verified to the letter. His last prophecy—that which he made to Niccolini—was brought forward; it was published and read with the utmost wonder, and got into the hands of all. His sermons were again read, and numerous passages in them were pointed out, in which events that had occurred had been again and again foretold. The party of the Piagnoni, as if by a miracle, again found themselves masters; the Medici, getting no aid from without, and surrounded by internal enemies, took to flight. The Republic was again proclaimed: Christ was again chosen King of Florence; a civic militia was enrolled; and all were, this time, prepared to defend

their reacquired liberty, or die in a manner worthy of it. The new Republic sustained numerous assaults; and everyone knows it was fated soon to fall; but defended by the genius of Michael Angelo, by the right hand of Ferruccio, and by the heart of a whole people, it had a glorious end, equal to its best days, when in its most flourishing condition. And in this marvellous effort, St. Mark's became the centre of the most faithful friends of their native land and of liberty. The disciples of the Friar, his prophecies, his sermons, his very pictures, inspired those valiant and magnanimous citizens to defend their Republic to the last hour. Thus the history of the true followers of Savonarola terminates only with the liberty of Florence.*

Their religious doctrine ever maintained itself strictly Catholic. When Rome was besieged by legions of Protestants, when the Florentine Republic was at war with the Pope, who assaulted it and would have destroyed it, the Piagnoni never united with the party of the Reformation. On the contrary, the few Protestants who were in Florence, and amongst them the celebrated Antonio Brucioli,† were constant objects of popular rage. This was another of the many manifest signs that the doctrine of Savonarola differed entirely from that of Luther: nevertheless, there were accusations and apologies without end; and, amid so much discussion, the judgement of many people in Italy continued for a long

* Time, however, did not extinguish, but rather increased, the superstitious veneration which the Friars in many convents in Tuscany fostered for Savonarola, paying adoration to his garments, offering up prayers to him, preserving relics of him, celebrating a service composed expressly for him, in which he was called saint, martyr, and prophet. We do not, however, go so far as to call such persons the disciples of Savonarola. *L'Officio proprio per Frà Girolamo Savonarola, e i suoi compagni* (a special prayer for friar Girolamo Savonarola and his companions), was printed at Prato, in 1860, by Count Carlo Capponi; but only 46 copies were thrown off. See Appendix R.

† He was the author of many works. Varchi, *Storia di Firenze*, ediz. Arbib, vol. i. p. 580.

time in a state of suspense. No sooner was Savonarola dead, than Pope Alexander strictly prohibited the circulation of his writings, threatening with excommunication whoever did not deliver up any copy in his possession to the Archbishop. At a later period, different views were entertained, and they were allowed to be reprinted. Things continued in this state until 1558, when Paul III., having called together the Congregation of the Index, required them to make a minute and diligent examination of these writings. The dispute was serious and long: on reading some extracts selected by a committee of four cardinals, the Pope flew into such a passion, that, stamping on the ground, he called out—‘This is Martin Luther; this is pestiferous doctrine; my most reverend lords, what have you been about?’ But after more mature consideration, he gave way, and with the exception of the dialogue on prophetic truth and some sermons, which were suspended, all the rest were allowed to be freely read.*

The followers of Savonarola continued to profess themselves to be wholly and invariably Catholic. San Filippo Neri and Santa Caterina dei Ricci worshipped him as a saint, Benedict XIV. held him worthy to be so called,† and many of his works were adopted for instruction in Catholic schools.‡ In truth, whoever reads them must be thoroughly convinced that he continued ever faithful to the dogmas of his religion; that it never entered into his mind to interfere with the unity of the Church, but that he rather desired to bind it more closely.

* See the *Discorso* of Paolino Bernardini of Lucca, composed on this occasion, and published by Quetif. See also a letter of Frà Vincenzo Ercolani of Perugia, published by Signor Aquarone, among the documents in his biography of Savonarola.

† *De servorum Dei beatificatione*, vol. viii.


‡ The ‘Triumph of the Cross,’ and the treatise on the ‘Simplicity of the Christian Life.’

Nevertheless, he had within him a spirit of progression, which he had no desire to conceal, but was rather anxious to avow. He was the first to raise up, and display before the world, the standard of that epoch which many call the *Renaissance*. He was the first, in the fifteenth century, to make men feel that a new life had penetrated to and had awakened the human race; and hence he may justly be called the prophet of a new civilisation. But whoever would make him the head of a sect, of a system, would be greatly mistaken; and would prove that he neither knew Savonarola nor his time. The Renaissance was not yet modern civilisation, but was only a presentiment of it; it had a general character, but it was undefined and undetermined. The men of that time foresaw a new and more vast synthesis of the human race, and felt that they were approaching nearer to God. The blood beat in their pulses with feverish strength; ideas followed each other with delirious rapidity; they were subject to a power greater than themselves, which launched them into an unknown ocean, to discover a land unknown, but divine. Christopher Columbus personifies and represents them all. It is a time of heroes rather than of thinkers. To ask them what their object is—whither they are going—is a vain question. They know only that they are moving forward; they feel that they are bringing the world along with them; and know nothing besides; nor need we be surprised at this unconsciousness, it is rather their peculiar character, and their particular merit. They penetrate the darkness; they open the path to a new progress, not by the force of reason, but by that of will and of faith. They have the minds of prophets, the hearts of heroes, the destiny of martyrs. The world stood aghast at this new race of Titans, who arose to fight with the old idols, and it soon began to oppress them; but it worships their remains, and lingers

in their footsteps. The Renaissance afterwards gives way to modern civilisation ; synthesis has resolved itself into analysis ; schools and systems have arisen : Galileo, Bacon, Descartes, came to reap the harvest that had been sown. But what could these sovereign and calm intellects have done, had not those great and generous souls, by their bold daring, rent the dark veil—had they not, by their martyrdom, levelled the ground ?

The drama, of which we have been spectators in the life of Savonarola, is so extended after his death as to become the drama of all Europe. We see everywhere the same struggle : two worlds are, as it were, in opposition to one another. In one we see the splendour of art, of science, of wealth ; but all this is not enough to preserve its vitality, for it is rotten at the core. Next appear a handful of men, who, though persecuted and oppressed, keep united, and by their union form another world. They are rude in speech ; their reasonings are strange ; their books are incorrect ; but the spring of their genius is inexhaustible, because it flows from the heart, where they find a living source which never fails, which ever finds within itself fresh aliment, and, amid perils and blazing faggots, is restored to the vigour of youth. They were struck down it is true ; but from their blood sprang up thousands of followers ; their ideas became the faith of mankind, and laid the foundation of modern civilisation. Society was renovated, and saved by the courage of a few martyrs ; the world advanced by the power of virtue and heroism ; and we feel convinced, that when the human race is destined to make some great step in its eternal progress, Providence will not open the sanctuary of truth to those only who are of powerful mind and acute genius, but especially to men who are pure in heart and generous in character.

Such was the epoch of the Renaissance to which two



Italians first led the way. Columbus opened the paths of the ocean, Savonarola began to open those of the Spirit. While one was ascending the pulpit, the other was spreading his sails to the wind, and dashing his bold prow through the waters of an unknown sea. Both believed themselves to have been sent by God to spread Christianity over the earth; both had strange visions, which aroused each to his appointed work; both laid their hand upon a new world, unconscious of its immensity. One was rewarded with chains—the other with a consuming fire!

Who will henceforth say that Savonarola led the way to the *servum arbitrium* of Luther, or the predestination of Calvin? He embraced a far wider world—looked to a far more distant end. He was the first in his time to direct humanity to that goal which, to this day, we have not reached, but to which we are now advancing with redoubled strength. It was his desire that reason and faith, religion and liberty, might meet in harmonious union; but he did not think that a new system of religious doctrine became therefore necessary. His work may be associated with those of the Council of Constance, of Dante Alighieri, and Arnaldo of Brescia, as initiating that Catholic reform, which was the unceasing desire of the great Italians.

And when that reform, the necessity of which is become an universal conviction, shall have advanced to the reality of facts, Christianity will have arrived at its true and full developement, and Italy will again be at the head of a renovated civilisation. Perhaps men may then better comprehend the character and the life of him who, for that cause, suffered a glorious martyrdom!

APPENDIX F.

DOCUMENT XXI.

Vol. II. Page 13.

*Letter of Savonarola to Charles VIII., dated May 26, 1495.**

O King, live for ever!—Some days ago I addressed a letter to you in your own language, on many things that are necessary for your State and Government; in the which, as I take a great interest, I cannot rest contented with what I have already written, especially as at this time things are far from being in a secure condition. I will therefore again employ your own language, that your most Christian Highness may better understand what I have to say. The love of God, and the desire for His honour, lead me to be attached to your Highness; and my regard is greater because I am certain that He has elected you from among all the other princes in Christendom to be His minister in the mystery of the renovation of His Church, begun in the present days. On that account I feel myself called upon to write from time to time to your Majesty, in order that I may give notice of what is necessary for the safety of your Highness. Therefore, most renowned Sire, I am anxious that you should keep in mind that the Almighty conducts all his operations with infinite wisdom, by appropriate means; and as we cannot doubt that our salvation must depend upon preparatory measures, nothing will lead us to the life eternal except the grace of God and our good works, as St. Peter has required of us, when he says, *Satagite ut per bona opera certam*

* This letter, written in French, was translated and published in Florence with many mistakes, much to the annoyance of Savonarola. (See p. 13). The reading we have followed is that of the manuscript in the Riccardi library (No. 2053), which is a very different translation. At the end of it is the following note: *this has been printed very correctly*. We have thought it right to publish it for two reasons; first, because Savonarola found fault with the printed copy, which is now extremely scarce, and next because it appears to us that '*correctly*' in the note, must have been intended to be '*incorrectly*;' that is *corrotta*, and not *corretta*.

vestram vocationem faciatis ; which means, ' Be earnest, that by your good works your being called may be certain.'*

It is therefore necessary, most Christian Sire, that, being the elect of God, you should take appropriate measures : for if you do not, what you undertake will not be attended with any good result. I would therefore warn your Highness how that the same God, your only God (who in times past imparted to me your coming into Italy, the victory you obtained, and that which will follow, provided you do that which I now declare to you, on the part of the Almighty) has declared to me, that if your Highness does not cause your Barons and Ministers to conduct themselves differently from what they have hitherto done, and show better manners, He will withdraw His hand from you, will make the people rebel, and cause you much tribulation and opposition. This will lead your army into many dangers ; for in the sight of the Divine Majesty, it is not enough that you are yourself well disposed, and that you do no wrong, if you do not correct your subjects ; so that they do not oppress and practise extortions on the people of this city. Remember how Saul was made the first king of Israel, and how by his disobedience in not taking a right course, he was expelled from his kingdom : therefore I write to you on the part of, and by the command of, the Almighty, and exhort your Highness that you do not thus treat your faithful servants in Florence, nor suffer them to be injured ; but be beneficent to them in the way I have pointed out in the three letters I wrote to you.† I am not moved in this by them, but solely by the inspiration of God ; and not chiefly for their good, for as a stranger it is no concern of mine, but for the good of your Highness and the Holy Church ; and above all, for the honour of God, which will result from it, which I have most at heart. If you act otherwise, not only will your Highness suffer much injury, but also great dishonour.

It is said everywhere that you injure your friends, although it is believed that you have no such intention ; but that it is done by your Barons, who keep the truth from you, and are more occupied with their own gains than with the welfare and honour of your Highness. If you will only do what I now tell you, I can assure you that before you leave Florence you

* ' Wherefore the rather, brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure : for, if ye do these things, ye shall never fail.'— 2 Peter, i. 10.— Tr.

† See Appendix I.

will have all Italy devoted to you, and you will receive the thanks of the whole people, who will express their love by saying — ‘*Blessed is he who cometh in the name of the Lord.*’ Know, most Christian Sire, that it is the will of God that the Florentines shall be well treated by you, especially by entering into covenants, conventions, and treaties with them. For the Lord spoke against Zedekiah, King of Jerusalem, for not having fulfilled his covenant with Nebuchadnezzar, who was no less unfaithful, as is said by Ezekiel in the 17th chapter :—*Qui dissolvit pactum, nunquid effugiet? Vivo ego, quoniam juramentum quod sprevit et fœdus quod prævaricatus est, ponam in caput ejus.**

Most Christian Sire, remember that which I told you face to face,† and wrote in letters; how that the people of Florence had always been in times past thoroughly French, that they have always been faithful to the House of France, and true servants to your Highness; except a small number, who, contrary to the wishes of the general people, have perhaps sided with your adversaries: and most Christian Sire, the more you show favour to and honour this people, you will so much the more know the love and affection they have for your Highness. For in the present adverse state of things, while the people of this city have been tempted by your enemies, with large promises, to separate themselves from you, they have not been in any degree unfaithful, and are making every effort to raise money to assist you; and their fidelity would be still greater were you to treat them well, and have them honoured in the eyes of the rest of the people of Italy. As you have ever found them, among all the people of Italy, your friends and allies, and that chiefly through our preachings, you need not doubt that they will prove a real and powerful support to your Highness in all your undertakings in Italy; for, among all the princes and peoples, the Florentines alone have continued faithful, and have shown a true and natural attachment to your Majesty.

Be assured, most Christian Sire, that fortune will attend you if you will believe that it is the will of God (and it is by His

* ‘Seeing he despised the oath by breaking the covenant (when lo, he had given his hand), and hath done all these things, he shall not escape.’

‘Therefore, thus saith the Lord God: As I live, surely mine oath that he hath despised, and my covenant that he hath broken, even it will I recompense upon his own head.’—Ezekiel, cxvii. 18, 19.—TR.

† This conversation took place in the Palazzo Riccardi (then the Medici palace).

command that I write what His will is) that you not only do no evil to the people of Florence, but rather that you do good to them, and that you pay due honour to the new government, and not to any citizen in particular ; for private citizens look only to their own advantage, and not to that of your Highness and the Republic ; and they would be the first to fall off and separate themselves from your most Christian Majesty when any opportunity occurred which they could make use of. And that you may know that such is the will of God, although many promises have been made to this renowned city by the other powers of Italy, consider that, up to this time, no sign, or act of love, friendship, or goodwill has been shown to them, nor has any effect been produced ; and you may be certain that by means of our preachings and exhortations, there neither has been nor will there ever be, any falling off from your Christian Majesty. Consider that, in all their adversity, from which, with a single word, you could have liberated them—you have not done it, and yet, notwithstanding, there is not one who has not continued faithful to your Highness, which could not have happened but for the direction of God and Divine inspiration ; and they might have thrown off their natural affection for your Highness, had it not been that the Almighty miraculously guarded and supported them. It is His will that they continue united and leagued with your Majesty, and you with them, and that under your banner, protection, and favour, their general liberty and government be amplified and augmented, and not the interest of any particular citizen. The Divine Goodness has ordered and ordained the utter destruction of all tyrants and private citizens who would usurp power and dominion, or place themselves at the head of this flourishing Florentine Republic, as in times past has happened ; for this new and popular form of government and direction of their affairs, has been instituted by God and not by man, and it is His will that it should be advanced.

Therefore, most Christian Sire, if you will not pay due attention to what I have now said, I, on the part of God, say and declare these true and most faithful words, which you will do well to ponder upon with great diligence, namely, that His anger will be roused against you, that He will bring many enemies to oppose you ; that He will not lead you to victory as He has heretofore done ; and will heap so many tribulations upon you, that you will, in the end, be compelled to do by force that which you have not been willing to do from love : *Ejus enim voluntati nemo potest resistere* (For no one can resist

His will). And this is the true cause: He has chosen this city, and has filled it with his servants, and has ordained that it shall be magnified and raised up permanently by your protection, preservation, and by your hands, if your Highness be so disposed; *for he who touches it touches the pupil of His eye*. And I say further to you, most Christian Sire, on the part of the Almighty, if you will change your conduct (which to this time you have not done) and will behave properly to the city of Florence, He will give you victory, and by means of His power, will enable you to obtain a great kingdom; and the people will be devotedly obedient to your Highness; and, as I have assured you and written to you, the people of Florence will always be loyal and faithful, and you will be in the heart of Italy like the anchor in a ship, and so it will be with your most Christian Majesty if you will support and show favour to the Florentine Republic; and not to individuals and slavish private citizens, who do not conduct themselves uprightly either towards God or your Highness.

I have, on the part of the Almighty, written to you what His will is; and what I have written to you is the truth, and if your Majesty will not do what I have written and said, on the part of God, He will undoubtedly visit you with all the evils I have declared on the part of His Divine Majesty. But if you obey the Divine will, by treating the Florentines justly, and the other peoples with much mercy (as is the duty of your Highness and of every other prince) you need have no fear—for God has enlightened me on that which I have declared on his part—that the whole world will not be able to do you harm; and should all the powers in the universe be leagued against your most Christian Majesty, no evil could befall you. Thus your good or your evil lot is in your hands, as I have declared unto you *in verbo Domini*. Therefore I pray you, *per viscera misericordiæ Dei nostri* (by the bowels of mercy of our God), and by the great love and affection I bear towards your most Christian Highness in *Christ Jesus*, that you follow no other counsel; for what I write to you is as true as the Gospel, and all other counsels are opposed to your state—to your own welfare and safety.

APPENDIX G.*

DOCUMENT XXIV.

Vol. II. Page 26.

Brief of Pope Alexander VI. to Hieronymus Savonarola, of the Order of Preachers.†

Beloved Son,—Health and apostolic benediction. We have learned by the reports of many persons, that among the other labourers in the vineyard of the Lord of Hosts, you labour much : at which we greatly rejoice, and return thanks to Almighty God, that he has shown so much favour to the human understanding. Nor do we doubt that, by the help of the Holy Spirit, which confers immortal favours, you will be able to sow the word of God among Christian people, and will reap fruit a hundred-fold. We have also, within the last few days, understood by your letters that such is the state of your mind, and that such is your design ; that is, that in your preachings you lay before the people that which you know to be the service of God. And as we have lately been informed that you, moreover, have said in your public preachings that what you declare of future events comes not from yourself nor from the wisdom of men, but that you say it by a Divine revelation ; we are desirous, as it is our duty by our pastoral office, to have some conversation with you, to hear from your own lips what it has pleased God to make known to you ; that we may pursue a better course. We therefore exhort and command you, that, in all holy obedience, you come to us without delay, and we shall receive you with paternal love and charity.

Given at St. Peter's, at Rome, under the fisherman's seal, this 25th day of July, 1495, and the fourth year of our Pontificate.

B. FLORIDUS.

* Written in Latin.—TR.

† This and the following letter were given very imperfectly by Perkins and Meyer. The first took it from the codex of St. Mark's, in Venice ; the second from the Riccardian library, cod. 2053 ; but with many omissions and mistakes. We have copied the Riccardian manuscript faithfully, although even this is not very correct.

APPENDIX H.

DOCUMENT XXV.

Vol. II. Page 33.

*The Answer of Friar Hieronymus Savonarola, of the Order of Preachers, to Alexander P.P. VI.**

Most blessed Father,—We kiss thy blessed feet. Although I know that the commands of our superiors are always to be obeyed, as it is written, '*qui vos audit me audit*' (who listens to you listens to me), I know, nevertheless, that we have to attend rather to that which is in their mind than in their words. † as it is known to your Holiness, from what was written by Alexander III. your ancient predecessor, to the Archbishop of Ravenna, to this effect:—'Consider with all diligence the nature of the business on which you are addressed, either reverently to fulfil our command, or give a reasonable excuse why you cannot fulfil it; and we shall patiently admit it, provided it does not contain some unjust insinuation.' I have long desired to visit Rome, which I have not yet seen, in order that I might tread the threshold of the Apostles Peter and Paul, and the other Saints, and be able to worship their relics and blessed images; and I feel that desire still more strongly on account of the command from your Holiness, who have deigned to call a poor worm into your presence. But many obstacles stand in the way, and I will endeavour to show that the causes are reasonable, that it may be clearly seen that I am detained by necessity against my will, and am unable to obey commands which I most willingly and reverently acknowledge.

Bodily infirmity is the first obstacle, caused by fever and dysentery, from which I am now suffering; next a constant agitation in body and mind, brought on by exertions for the welfare of this State, especially in the present year, which has so weakened my stomach and other vital parts, that I am quite unable to bear any increase of labour; so much so that I am advised by my physicians to give over preaching and study; for they and others are agreed that unless I submit to proper remedies, I run the risk of an early death. When, with much

* Written in Latin.—Tr.

† Here some words are missing.

bloodshed and many other evils, the Lord gave liberty to this State, and restored concord and the sanctity of laws, many wicked men, both in the city and beyond it, became hostile to me. Citizens, as well as foreigners, thirsting for human blood, eagerly endeavoured to raise up their own horn, and to deliver the State over to rapine and servitude. Frustrated in their object, they became intensely enraged against me; hating me for no cause, and seeking my destruction, sometimes by poison, at other times by the sword; so that I could not venture out of doors with safety unless accompanied by guards. Therefore, when I made application to the King of France, although I was provided with a very safe conduct, citizens much attached to the Republic would not allow me to go beyond the limits of their jurisdiction. And although I place my trust in the Lord, I considered that I must not seem to tempt him by neglecting due caution; for it is written, 'If you are persecuted in one city, fly to another.'

With regard to the reformation of the State which the Lord has brought about, its roots are as yet weak, and unless they be fostered and strengthened, they might, by the efforts of very wicked men, be damaged or destroyed. Therefore, as it is the opinion of prudent and good men that my leaving the city would be a great injury to this people, and in other respects would be of little use, I trust that your Holiness will not be displeased by a brief delay, while this work is being perfected; for I am certain that those impediments to my going must be ascribed to Divine interference; that it is the will of God that I should not go from hence.

But I hope that, in a short time, I shall be able to go to Rome, as it is the wish of your Holiness, and with greater satisfaction to your apostolic object. If your Holiness should have any desire to be correctly informed respecting the things I have publicly preached on, coming events, which will bring ruin on Italy, and on the renovation of the Church, you will be fully instructed by a little book I am now printing, and which, so soon as it is completed, I shall lay before your Holiness, and from it all that you may have heard of me will be fully explained. I do not admit that I have foretold anything that is not contained in that book; I have brought forward those things only which I was ordered to say; what remains shut up, no mortal can dare to pry into. The contents of that book I have brought out that the world may see that if they had not taken place I must have been a false prophet; but if they have happened as foretold, then we have to return

thanks to God our Saviour, that He has shown such solicitude for our salvation, that He would not have any one perish eternally.

Finally, I beseech your Beatitude, that these my most true and manifest excuses may be admitted, as well as my assurance that I have no greater wish than humbly to obey your Holiness, and that no burden may be laid upon me beyond what I have strength to bear. I shall be a spur to myself, so soon as all just hindrances are removed, to satisfy your Holiness, as far as it is in my power, to whom I humbly commend myself.

From the Convent of St. Mark, in Florence, the last day of July, 1495.

APPENDIX I.

DOCUMENT XX.

Vol. II. Page 38.

*Three unpublished letters of Savonarola to Charles VIII.**

1.

(TRANSLATED FROM THE FRENCH.)

O King, live for ever.—Not many days since I wrote some letters to your most Christian Highness, in which I showed you that you ought not to doubt that it was the hand of God, and not your own might, which led you into Italy, conducted you back, and liberated you from the great dangers to your safety from your opponents and enemies. And as I, on the part of God, had predicted those things, your Highness ought not to require any signs to induce you to believe my words; for you may be assured, most Christian Sire, that I never wrote anything to your Highness but what God had commanded me to do. Consider, then, the love which God has shown towards you; the special care which He has taken of your Highness; condescending to take special cognizance of your affairs; to crown all your undertakings with glorious victory, and enlarge the kingdom of your exalted Majesty. I therefore, on the part of the Almighty, again address your

* They are in the Riccardian library, cod. 2053. It is there stated that they were sent after the King had taken possession of the kingdom of Naples.

most Christian Majesty, that you may observe the good faith promised to the Florentines, restore to them their property, give due credit to their honour, and rely upon their fidelity, restraining your people from their evil and perverse deeds. If your most Christian Majesty will do those things, I, on the part of God, declare and promise, that He will give you victory, and as extensive a kingdom as your most Christian Majesty can desire, and will spread your renown over the whole earth. Let your Highness bear in mind, that up to the present time having been wanting in faith, you have met with that misfortune which I foretold to you. I now again give you notice, that if you will at least have faith, and will perform the things I have told you, you will have all the good and gracious things which, on the part of God, I have declared and promised.

The reason of those things is this: that God being more inclined to mercy than judgement, and to do good rather than evil to his creatures, by your not having attended to that which I declared to you on the part of God, you have met with the evil He has sent; you ought certainly the more readily to believe that by observing that which I have declared to you on His part, you will the sooner receive the good He has promised. And so much the more ought you to observe that which I, his unworthy servant, command you. While you fulfil that obligation, you will never do what is amiss; and if after you have done all, you do not receive that which, on His part, I have promised, I am contented that you should no longer put any trust in me. May the Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the power of His Divine Majesty, ever abide with my Sovereign Lord.

2.

(TRANSLATED FROM THE FRENCH.)

O King, live for ever.—Almighty God rules and governs inferior by superior beings. He first enlightens, with the mysteries of the Church, the higher angels, by whom the lower are enlightened; and by the lower, the men whom He has elected are enlightened, and by these last all the rest of the Church.* And as the lower angels believe in the higher, and men and God's ministers believe in the lower angels, and in all His Scriptures and principles, so also it is His will that men should believe prophets, when they are enlightened by

* These ideas are continually repeated in his sermons.

them. And those who, in all singleness of heart, have believed in the servants of God, have derived from that belief that which is a benefit to them, honour and glory; and together with a temporal kingdom, have obtained one that is eternal. But those who have not been willing to believe have been condemned by God, and have lost not only life and things temporal, but also things that are eternal, and calumnious things have been written concerning them.

Most Christian Sire, the words I say unto you are not mine, but God's. I pray you to reflect earnestly upon that which the King Eternal has caused to be made known to you, and that your Majesty may do all that in you lies to fulfil them, so that the words of God shall not fall to the ground, as it is written, *Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away*. Most Christian King, your Florentines have shown you their fidelity, having been patient to this hour, in fire and in water; and that, too, notwithstanding that your Majesty has not restored their property, and they, in consequence, are in great distress. That is evil in the sight of God, for the tears of his servants have come before His Divine Majesty, and He has begun to show to you some proofs thereof. I pray you, therefore, not to turn to and be led astray by those who are evil counsellors, and that your Majesty will keep to your engagements, not only to the Florentines but to me, so that God may not be offended with you, and withdraw his hand altogether from you. I have written to you what I have again received by inspiration.*

3.

(WRITTEN IN ITALIAN.)

O King, live for ever.—I am much grieved by the tribulations which have come upon your most Christian Majesty; and I cannot refrain from writing to you that with which God has inspired me for your safety. Most Christian Sire, the hand of the Lord which made you victorious in Italy, has again guarded and preserved you with great mercy from the greatest dangers; and, as your Majesty knows, the Lord, before the victory at Naples, had designed to predict it to you through his unworthy servant; and that you may understand that that victory came from the Almighty, and was not gained by your might; and as you have not been willing to believe

* From all this it is clear how firmly Savonarola believed in his prophetic mission.

this, He has caused it to be predicted to you, by the same servant, that you will have difficulties to encounter from that unbelief, from your own sins, and those of your subjects, so that by the fulfilment of all those things which his servant had declared unto you, you may seek for no other signs, but believe in the plain words, and perform all that he has declared unto you, on the part of the Eternal God.

Behold that which I had predicted to you, namely, the rebellion of your people, and the powerful opposition you are encountering from your adversaries. Believe not that you will be rescued by your own power, but solely by the mercy of God, through the prayers we have offered up for the protection of your crown. I will, on the part of God, again declare unto you, that if you will not believe, and will not keep faith with the Florentines, by restoring their property and curbing the evil and perverse deeds of your servants, greater tribulation than ever will come upon you. And if you will continue obstinate, and will not humble yourself, I declare unto you, on the part of God, that He will revoke your election to that office for which he chose you as his minister, and will appoint another. But if you have faith, and will keep faith with the Florentines, by surrendering their property and doing them honour, in the way that I have on other occasions written to your most Christian Majesty; and if you and yours will rightly conduct yourselves, chastising the wicked, and preferring the good, God will again give you victory, and the whole world will not be able to resist you, and He will confer upon you whatever kingdom and empire you may desire. May your most Christian Majesty ponder well upon my words, and not place confidence in those who do not listen to divine counsels, nor seek to promote your glory, but their own benefit. I will pray to God that he may enlighten you, so that you may no longer have to bewail your tribulations, as the prophet Samuel had to bewail the misdeeds of Saul, king of Israel.

APPENDIX K.**

Volume II. Page 39.

*Letter of Savonarola to his brother Albert.**

May the Grace of our Lord Jesus be with you.—Having heard, my brother, of the great poverty of Ognibene, who is overpowered with children, it appears to me that from the love of God, and from fraternal love, you should take some charge of his wife and children, and so help them like a good brother; for if you do not, God will judge you as doing wrong, and having conferred more favours upon you than upon your brothers, He will take them from you. You cannot look to me, *for I am dead to the world*, and can render assistance to none of you, except in things spiritual; praying to God that He may enlighten you with his grace, that you may know that this life is as nothing, and that you may long for that which is eternal. Such is my state, that in all other respects you must consider me as dead. Why it is so would be too long for me to write. I pray you then to help one another, as love enjoins; and that you will now and then send money to Ognibene, or some bushels of wheat. If you bestow some charity, as indeed you ought to do, it would be best. The Apostle says, '*Si quis suorum et maxime domesticorum curam non habet, fidem negavit et est infideli deterior.*' † I pray you, then, *by the bowels of mercy of our God*, that you may be disposed to render them some assistance this winter. I write also at this time to your master Zoane, that you may help him, and that you take care to lead a virtuous life, *for the world gets dry*. If you are liberal, especially to those of your own house, in things that are necessary, God will be liberal to you. I recommend our sisters to your care. *May the love of Jesus Christ be with thy spirit, Amen.* At Florence, the 28th day of October, 1495.

Thy brother, FRA HIERONYMUS.

* It had the following superscription:—*Egregio Artium et Medicinæ Doctori, Mo. Alberto Savonarolæ fratri suo amatissimo*, FERRARIE. His youngest brother. For an account of the family, see the note to p. 5, vol. i.—Tr.

† 'But if any provide not for his own, and especially for those of his own house, he hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel.'—First Epistle to Timothy, v. 8.—Tr.

APPENDIX L.**

Vol. II. Page 39.

*Letter of Savonarola to his Mother.**

Most honoured and much-loved Mother,—May Divine peace and consolation be with you. Having heard, through one of your people, of the death of my uncle Borso, your brother, I began to think earnestly on what has been the providence of God towards our family ; for the more I have prayed to Him, and do still pray, I have been much more struck by it ; and most assuredly I offer up my thanks to the all-wise and most benignant Deity, the Creator and Redeemer of our souls ; how much more He does for us than we ask for or think of. I believe that my prayers have been listened to far beyond my expectations, for praying for the salvation of your soul ; I see it come near to you, when you know to draw near unto it ; for the more the soul is bound to earthly things, so much the more is God estranged from its final destiny. From this it may be clearly seen how blind and insufficient human hopes are for elevating the mind to heavenly things. Our Creator often smites in order to awaken us, so that we may be roused from that heavy sleep in which we may have been for a long time sunk, regardless more of the present than of the future life. These, my mother, are voices from heaven, which like arrows shot into the heart, strongly draw away our affections from earthly and transient things, and invite us to the love of Jesus Christ. Believe me, my most dear mother, sisters, and brothers, that the benign Jesus, our most merciful Saviour, comes near to us, saying, Come to my kingdom, and leave this world so full of iniquity. And why sleep ye, when He, as one anxious for your salvation, smites to awaken you. Open your eyes, then, and be not ungrateful, but consider whether from the beginning of the world any servant of God has ever been without temptation, persecution, and tribulation, and that it will be so to the end. God chastises his children that they may not rest their hopes on earth. He takes from them every support, every root, every stay, so that seeing

* This letter, either on account of the haste with which it was written, or through the fault of him who copied it, is often incorrect, and several places require explanation ; we have marked these places by italics.—*Note of Padre Marchese.*

themselves forsaken by the world, and having no other refuge, they may throw themselves into his arms.

Oh ! the goodness of God, His infinite mercy, His inestimable love ; how he draws near to us as if he had great need of us ! Tell me, I pray, what rich man, what man glorying in this world, on whom this perverse time smiles, what man in this age of exaltation and refinement, in this our day, does any good ? What man draws near unto God with his whole heart ? Know you not that God cannot lie ? He has said that it is not only difficult, but impossible, that a rich man can be saved, and He has blessed the poor in spirit. Know you not the course of things in this world ? If you rest your hopes on it, behold how it deals with you, behold, I say. And you, Beatrice and Clara, my sisters and spiritual children, I pray you to give yourselves up wholly to prayer, and leave off all vanities, not in deeds only, but in affections, and devote yourselves to solitude and reading ; offer up prayers, and care not for society, for seeing or being seen. Contemplate Jesus Christ in his whole life, step by step ; do not associate with men, but let your heart be ever fixed on Jesus Christ, and he will bring you consolation far greater than you think. If you come near to him with a pure conscience, you will experience heavenly joys, and will esteem the world as nought, and will look upon all vain women as unhappy. O how great are the consolations derived from the prayers of those of pure conscience, and above all, by the virgin spouses of Christ, who by Him are so tenderly loved. Be then united with your mother in the love of Christ, and serve Him in love and in simplicity ; doubting not that His eye will be upon you, and He will not appear to do less for you than for others ; if you will consider rightly your time, it will be well for you. St. Paul, and, by his mouth, the Holy Spirit, says, that whosoever marries, sins not, but will have tribulations ; an example of which you have before you in your mother ; but that whosoever does not marry does better, and that the virgin who becomes a servant to Jesus, being sound in mind and in body, is more happy.

See that you live a holy and devotional life ; and if you taste the sweetness of Jesus, you will condemn all worldly pleasure. I have not been able to write so fully to you as I had designed ; for there are many other things which it is more necessary for me to write about, so that your concerns must be postponed ; but I shall take care that they be written to you.

And now, mother, I return to you, beseeching you that you may forget the world ; and this is what I wished to say in my

former letter, when I wrote to you about your thinking that I was dead; for it was my wish that you should all of you become enamoured of Jesus, and that you should not think more of your children than you can possibly help. I wished that your faith might be such, that you might see them die and suffer martyrdom without shedding a tear, like unto that most holy Hebrew woman, who looked upon her seven children crucified and put to death, and comforted them in their dying moments: and as did the holy Felicity of the New Testament. In wishing this, I would not be unmindful of your comfort, for that would be contrary to charity, but would diminish the force of your feelings; so that if it should come to pass that I must die, you may not take it too much to heart; that if I should fall you also might not fall. Whosoever fixes his hopes on God will not be forsaken; seek not, therefore, the things of this world, but life eternal, and that can only be attained through many tribulations. Let us not lay our foundation here below; this we are taught by the departed of our people; of what avails it to gather riches; to be splendidly attired, to be the glory and delight of the living, when pleasures such as these are so fleeting? Last Wednesday a handsome youth, in the freshness and vigour of life, fell down dead in the Duomo, to the amazement of everyone. Yesterday a young female singer, the sweetness of whose voice was the delight of all Florence, who surpassed all the other singers, fell down dead while acting, in much anguish—suffering the penalty of her sin; who, had she followed the course that I one time wished to show her, might not have come to that end. Of what good were those great pleasures? What has become of those melodious strains? Where are now those dainty meats? See you not that they all pass away like the wind? Let us then answer to God who calls us, and let Him have our whole heart. Let us seek Him, let us love Him, let us follow after Him, and nothing will be wanting that is necessary for us in our present life: let us do all that is possible for us to do on our part, and let us feel confident that He will not forsake us, for He has said, I will not leave thee, I will not forsake thee. If you tell me that there is shame in poverty, I reply, that no one ought to be ashamed to be as Christ and the Virgin Mary were. Where is our faith if we do not trust in the glory which God has said will be great, ineffable, eternal, and that the pains of hell will be dreadful. And since we must go to one or the other of these places, what have we to do? How shall we escape from going to hell and arrive in paradise? We are here for a short

space of time, but the life to come is without end. Why then do we labour in vain, what is the joy of an hour that is to be followed by everlasting torment? Far better is it to submit to tribulations that must soon pass away, to have eternal joy and peace and triumph without end. Call to mind the ancient martyrs. Where are now their feelings, their tortures, their severe tribulations, far greater than any you all have had to endure? All have passed away, and they are in glory, which will endure for ever; and the tyrants who persecuted them are suffering eternal punishment, from which they can never hope to be free. My dear mother, if we all from our inmost souls would think, would unceasingly ruminate, and fervently believe, that we are here only pilgrims on earth, and on our way to heaven or to hell, we should not set a high value on the things of this world, nor on riches or pleasures, nor think much of tribulations; but now-a-days men are blinded, and think not of those things, and seek to build where they can never occupy. O foolish, blind, and miserable mortals! who have had such promises from God for the keeping of his commandments, and such penalties by the neglect of them. You know by experience that you will not be long an inhabitant of this earth, and yet you think not of anything beyond it. O inconceivable blindness, how miserable is such a state! To think only of present things is the annihilation of all faith, of all love, and extinguishes every virtue. A lively faith has no other grief than that of sin; weeps not unless for offending God; a steadfast faith fears not tribulation, and survives death itself. This was the virtue by which the martyrs of old were supported in their cruel torments. But now-a-days, as we have no faith, we crave only after the things of this world, and take no account of the life that is to come; we grieve only for the loss of worldly goods, of relations and friends, and when, by our sins, we are deprived of the favour of God. All commend a righteous life, all speak with praise of virtue, but few follow after it. What then shall we now say? It is long since I thus opened my mouth to you, but now I have spoken out, from my very bowels, to be a coadjutor in the love of Jesus Christ. Give yourself up entirely to Him, fly to Him in all your tribulations, be ever grateful to Him, so that He may deign to call you to Him; and regard no more the things of this world than if they were not, and think only of rendering your conscience pure. Prepare yourself for death, and if anything displeasing occur to you, submit to it patiently, so that your conscience continue free from offence; which if you keep

spotless, be assured that tribulations will afflict you very little or in no degree. Think not anxiously about your daughters; see that they be good; not that goodness only which the world applauds, but that which is pleasing to God: that is, that they be devout, given to prayer, to fasting, to holy discourses, as spouses of Christ; and you may be certain that God will watch over them, and lead them far beyond that which they may know how to ask of him. And although they be not in a convent, they may equally render service to God in the world, and be spouses of Christ. Your frequently writing to me will never be troublesome to me, although I shall not often be able to write so long a letter to you as this has been, which I have had to resume five times, before being able to finish it, so many have been the things I have had to do. Write frequently to me in the name of God, and I will oblige myself to send you an answer, either a short or a long one. As to my uncle, I shall say no more than that I shall say masses for his soul. Strengthen my brothers in a resolution to lead a virtuous life, and to persevere in that course, and say for me to my aunt Margaret, that I grieve for her affliction, and that if she will surrender herself to God, and pass her life in His love, she will find comfort; for otherwise this world will only bring sorrow to her.

May peace and love be amongst all of you. From Florence, this 5th day of November, 1495.

APPENDIX M.*

DOCUMENT XXXVI.

Volume II. Page 181.

*Brief of Pope Alexander VI. excommunicating Savonarola.**

Beloved Children—Health and Apostolic Benediction. We have heard, on several occasions, from persons worthy of credit, learned men, both ecclesiastical and secular, that a certain Frà Girolamo Savonarola, of Ferrara, of the Order of Preachers, and now, as it is said, Vicar of Saint Mark's, in Florence, has disseminated certain pernicious doctrines in the City of Flo-

* The brief in Latin is published in the appendix of the work of Perrens. The Italian translation was printed in the fifteenth century, and has been published also by Padre Marchese, who, however, cannot believe that it was the only brief of excommunication. But when we read the subsequent briefs of the Pope and Savonarola's answers, as well as passages in his Sermons, we do not find any others referred to.

rence, to the scandal, damage, and injury of the souls of the simple, purchased by the precious blood of Christ; the which we have heard most assuredly to our great mental displeasure. But we had hoped for awhile that, becoming sensible of his error, he would leave so dangerous a course, and, with sincere singleness of heart, would return to Christ and the Holy Church, humbly and with due obedience. By a letter from ourself in the form of a brief, we commanded the said Frà Girolamo that, in all holy obedience, he should come to us and apologise for the errors with which he was charged, and for certain things which we had ourselves observed, and that he should cease entirely from preaching: but to none of those commands did he pay any obedience. We, however, moved by good intentions and with more benignity perhaps than under the circumstances was justifiable, admitted excuses he brought forward. We even pardoned his disobedience in continuing to preach, contrary to our prohibition, expecting that our clemency would lead him into the right path of obedience. He, however, persisting in his obstinacy, we sent him another letter in the form of a brief, dated November 7, in the fifth year of our pontificate, commanding him, in virtue of a holy obedience, and under the penalty of excommunication *latæ sententiæ*, incurred *ipso facto*, to unite the Convent of St. Mark, in Florence, to a certain new congregation called together from the Roman and Tuscan provinces, recently created and instituted by us; the which he has not done, nor has he obeyed our letters in any respect, treating the ecclesiastical censure he had incurred with contempt, and persisting in a damnable pertinacity. For which reasons, desiring to apply a proper remedy, for the sake of souls in that place, a duty imposed upon us by our pastoral office, so that the blood of those who are in our care may not, at the day of judgement, be laid to our charge: We command and order you, one and all, in virtue of holy obedience, and under pain of excommunication *latæ sententiæ*, that in your Churches on festival days, when a full congregation of the people shall be present, ye declare and make known the said friar Girolamo excommunicated, and to be held as such by every person, inasmuch as he refused obedience to our Apostolic admonition and commands. And we admonish all, under a like penalty of excommunication, both priests and monks, of whatever Order, and of whatever ecclesiastical dignity they may be, that the said Frà Girolamo being excommunicated, and suspected of heresy, be avoided, so that no one hold communication with

him, speak to him, praise his preaching, which we have interdicted, nor in any other way ; nor help him, nor show favour to him in any manner, directly or indirectly, nor go to the monastery or other place where he may abide. We command you and every one of you, that you aid and pay obedience to whatsoever shall be required of you by our dear son, Giovanni Victori da Camerino, professor of theology, our servant and commissioner in all things, which we have committed to him and commanded him to execute respecting the aforesaid Frà Girolamo.

B. BLONDUS.

Given at Rome, at St. Peter's, under the Fisherman's Seal, this 12th day of May, 1497, and fifth year of our Pontificate.

APPENDIX N.**

Volume II. Page 190.

Letter of Savonarola to his brother Albert.

Dearest Brother,—Frà Maurelio * is gone to some distance from Florence on account of the plague, and more particularly as one of our friars has died of the disease, although no one else has been attacked by it. The pestilence is in the land, but it is as yet not very severe ; the beginning of it, however, is very serious, if God does not come to protect us. More die of certain pestilential fevers than of that which is properly the plague ; but to such an extent, that 50, 60, 70, and some say, I know not how truly, 100 sometimes are carried off daily. Every day we see nothing in Florence but crucifixes and the dead. I am myself well, thank God, nor have I left Florence, because I am not afraid, although I have sent away more than seventy of the friars. I trust that the grace of God will be with us ; I have done what I could to console

* Maurelio (his brother) was an abbreviation of Marco Aurelio. He put on the Dominican gown in St. Mark's, on the 23rd of February 1496, receiving it from the hands of his brother Girolamo, who had then become Vicar-General, and he professed the 12th of March 1497. (Chron. St. Marci, fol. 148.) He died in the convent of San Romano, in Lucca, and the necrology there says of him that he was a good and humble man, following the example of his brother's sanctity.

those who are in affliction. If you think that I am in that state, be not distressed, for God will relieve me from all tribulation. As we are the first in Italy who have been afflicted, we may hope to be the first to receive consolation. Comfort our brothers and sisters, and all the rest of our circle. *May the grace of our Lord Jesus be with you. Amen.*—Your brother,

HIERONYMUS SAVONAROLA.

Florence, July 24, 1497.

APPENDIX O.**

Volume II. Page 192.

Savonarola to his brother Albert.

Dearest Brother,—I am in good health, although we have the plague in our house ; and so is Frà Maurelio. You need have no anxiety about my affairs, nor about anything that is said respecting them, for a thousand fables are in daily circulation. Rest assured that God will give us the victory in these persecutions. *God is my Saviour, and I will not fear what man can do to me.* In our society we are very joyful, and we lead a truly angelic life. It is true that I have sent away such of the friars as it was most important to guard against the disease, especially the younger men. So great is the charity of the citizens, that some have even opened their houses to us, paying all the expenses. One citizen provides for thirty, another for eighteen, another for fifteen, and another for fourteen. Forty still remain in the convent. All expenses are paid, and they do not allow us to want for anything, and we in the convent do not leave it, for they bring and take away everything.

If Rome be against me you must know that it is against Christ and not me ; that it fights against God. *Sed quis resistat ei, et pacem habet?* (Who in resisting Him can have peace?) Doubt not that God will be victorious. You need not have any fear on account of my remaining in Florence in the midst of the plague, for the Lord will protect me. I remain to console the afflicted, not friars only, but seculars also. Although both friars and citizens beg me to go away, and offer me a home,

I cannot make up my mind to abandon the flock. The joyful state of those who, dying, continue as they have lived, is almost incredible, and not our brethren only, but men and women among the citizens, leave the world commending their souls to the Saviour, and seem rather to fall asleep than to die; so that the living not only do not fear death, but long for it. I write this for your own satisfaction, and that of our brothers, our parents, and friends. *May Jesus be with you. Amen.*

Florence, the Vigil of the Assumption of our Lady,
(14th August) 1497.

APPENDIX P.

DOCUMENT XLII.

Vol. II. Page 246.

*Brief of Alexander VI. to the Florentine Republic, ordering Savonarola to be imprisoned or sent to Rome.**

To my dear Sons—Health and my Apostolic Benediction. We have recently heard of the serious and pernicious errors which that son of iniquity, Hieronymus Savonarola, of Ferrara, a professor of the Order of Preachers, with daring rashness, continues to disseminate in your city, to the great peril and scandal of the souls of many. We some time ago commanded him to come to us, to purge himself of the aforesaid sins, to observe certain things which we enjoined, and to cease altogether from preaching; but to neither command has he been obedient. Further, on another occasion, we required of him, in virtue of holy obedience, and under the penalty of excommunication, *latæ sententiæ*, incurring *ipso facto*, that he should unite the convent of St. Mark, in Florence, to a certain new congregation instituted by us, and called the Congregation of the Roman and Tuscan Provinces, the which he failed to do, and thus by such neglect he obstinately and damnably persisted in defiling ecclesiastical censure. Thereafter, from our desire to watch over the salvation of the souls of the faithful in Christ, we issued a brief, by which the said Hieronymus was to be declared and made known in the churches of your city to be excommunicated, and to be treated as such. We ordered, under a similar penalty, every person, of both sexes,

* Cod. Riccardiano, No. 2,053.

clerical and secular, monks of every order, and of every ecclesiastical dignity, that they should entirely avoid all communication with the said Hieronymus, as excommunicated, and held to be such as suspected of heresy ; that they should in no way communicate with him nor speak to him ; that they should not hear him either in his preachings or in any other way, nor in any manner aid him, directly or indirectly, nor go to any monastery or other place where he may reside, all which is plainly set forth in our apostolic brief. Nevertheless, we learn, to our high displeasure, from many persons worthy of being believed, that the said Hieronymus voluntarily and obstinately persists to disregard our admonitions and commands, by preaching in the cathedral and other churches of your city, to disseminate various errors, and seduce the people ; maintaining, by false reasonings that he is not excommunicated, and damnably affirming many things prejudicial to the Catholic faith, and to the power of this our Holy See ; that he appoints, celebrates, and takes part in public processions, and is even not ashamed to administer the holy sacrament to the faithful in Christ ; that very many citizens and inhabitants of your city attend his sermons, and presume to continue to show him favour and render him assistance, to the peril of their souls, showing, by so pernicious an example and scandal of many persons, that you, to whom our prohibitions are well known, do join in that contempt of them, while your city has always been held to be devoted to the Holy See. We, therefore, for the sake of the welfare, repose, safety, and reestablishment of order in your city, require that things so unexpected shall not continue, and shall under no pretext be overlooked.

We, having every desire to take proper steps in this matter, do therefore warn and admonish you in the name of the Lord, and we strictly require that, in virtue of a holy obedience, and to show your reverence for and devotion to this our Holy See, you send the said Hieronymus to us under safe custody ; and if he shall come with a penitent heart, we, like a pious Father, for your sake, and because we desire not the death of a sinner, but rather that he would turn from his wickedness and live, will receive and treat him with benignity. If this be not done, that you shall shut him up, as a corrupt member, in some private place, and have him carefully watched, so that he may no longer be able to converse with anyone, and so continue to disseminate his scandals still farther. If, however, you shall treat this command with contempt, which we cannot believe you will, we give you notice that, in order to uphold the dignity and authority of this our Holy See, we shall

place your city under an ecclesiastical interdict, and other more severe penalties which we know of, and will have recourse to ; because, in defiance of our commands, you shall have presumed to support so pernicious a man, one who has been excommunicated and publicly declared to be suspected of heresy.

Given at Rome, at St. Peter's, under the seal of the Fisherman, this 26th day of February, 1498, and the sixth year of our Pontificate.

APPENDIX Q.

DOCUMENT LVIII.

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*Sentence of Death on the three Friars.**

The twenty-third day of the month of May 1498. Present the honourable lords of the Council of Eight in requisite number assembled ; and all things required to be observed having been observed, and a vote having been taken, their colleague Francesco Cini being absent ; considering, by their trials and confessions, the crimes perpetrated and committed by the Friar Girolamo Savonarola of Ferrara, by the Friar Salvestro of Florence, and by the Friar Domenico of Pescia, all of the Order of Preachers and of the Convent of St. Mark, and having examined and comprehended their most heinous wickedness therein set forth, seeing also that each and every one of them has been degraded by the Archbishop, in the presence of the people, in the presence of the most reverend General of the whole Order of Saint Dominick and Apostolic Commissioner, and in the presence of a most dignified Commissioner sent by the Most Holy Father ; seeing further that the said friars have been handed over to the secular arm by the said most reverend Commissioner, by virtue of an authority for the same, given by a brief from the Sovereign Pontiff, publicly made known—in order that the ends of justice may be fulfilled and that the said friars shall not go forth free and unpunished—

Girolamo Savonarola, of Ferrara,
Salvestro, of Florence,
Domenico, of Pescia,

* *Libro dei Partiti degli Otto di Custodia e Balìa* ; maggio e agosto, 1498, carte 51. This document has been often published.

are condemned each and every one of them to be publicly hanged, and afterwards burned in and upon the Piazza of the Magnificent Signory, that their souls may be separated from their bodies. And this shall be the warrant to the Captain of the Piazza for the due execution of this sentence.

Done in the Court of our Magnificent Signory in the presence of these witnesses, Francesco di Barone and Filippo di Domenico Morelli, citizens and notaries of Florence.

Registered by Luca, called Formica, Clerk, this 24th of May.

APPENDIX R.

Letter from Professor Villari to Mr. Horner.

A criticism appeared lately in an Italian journal, accompanied by much praise, of two publications relating to Savonarola, the one entitled *L'Officio proprio per Frà Girolamo Savonarola e i suoi Compagni, scritto nel secolo xvi.*; the other, *Poesie di Frà G. Savonarola tratte dall' Autografo*. Professor Villari has given me his opinion on these publications in the following letter; which, it is not inopportune to remark, is in English:—

‘Pisa, January 15, 1863.

‘MY DEAR SIR— . . . My opinion of the said publications is this:—As to the first, which is, as you know, not very recent, I must repeat what I said in a note of my book,* that it is a monument of superstition, and nothing more. Some friars used to place candles before the image of Savonarola and his two companions, and they said prayers expressly composed for the occasion. This *Officio* is one of those prayers. The editor, Signor Guasti, tries to make a great deal of it; he wants to prove that Savonarola was really a saint, and that he performed miracles. The strongest argument on which he relies is, that St. Catherine and other saints worshipped Savonarola and his two companions. She was a saint—she worshipped Savonarola—therefore he must be a saint also. There is all the strength of the argument. The editor quotes some accounts of miracles from ancient chronicles, and concludes:—“As for those who bring documents to deny the sanctity and

* Vol. ii., p. 370.—L. H.

the miracles of Savonarola, we answer—that St. Catherine and other saints did not want documents to know that Savonarola was a saint.” Do you think it is worth while to answer to such arguments? But look where a blind superstition leads. St. Catherine and other saints worshipped Savonarola and his two companions; then a good Catholic must, or at least can, do the same. But who are those companions? One of them is Frà Salvestro, whom we know, beyond any doubt, to have been a hypocrite and a traitor. Are we to kneel before such a man, because some believe that St. Catherine did so?—and might she not have been mistaken? It is strange that Savonarola meets always either with calumnious detractors or blind worshippers, and that few are satisfied with admiring the martyr of political and religious freedom. As for those who say that saints don’t want to know documents and historical facts, history can only leave them to converse with saints.

‘Now what are those *Poesie di F. Girolamo Savonarola tratte dall’ Autografo*, Firenze 1862? This is a very strange blunder. You know that Savonarola used to have large pocket-books, wherein he used to put down his ideas, or to sketch his compositions. In one of them, at Milan, I found the sketch of almost all his poetical compositions, and as some of them were not published, and not known in a better form, I published, in my Appendix, only those songs which I did not find in the much more correct and improved copy we have from the hand of Frà Benedetto.*

‘Now Signor Guasti and Count Capponi believe that as the MS. at Milan is an autograph, and that of Frà Benedetto, in Florence, is a copy, we must only rely on the first. And so they publish the sketch as the only genuine, and they look with contempt on the last copy, because it is of a second hand. But they did not know, or they did not remember, that some of those poems were published by Savonarola himself, and he never followed the first sketch, but always the second copy. It is just the same as if some English editor, finding the original draft of Macaulay’s History, and only a copy of the more finished and polished composition, should publish the first and say that it is the true edition of Macaulay.

‘If you compare this new edition of the *Poesie di G. Savonarola* with the others, or with the MS. in the Magliabechian library, you will find in the first, not only reproduced bar-

* For remarks on the poetry of Savonarola see vol. ii., p. 150.—L. H.

barous words which Savonarola himself had corrected, but even in some places there is no sense at all, although the autograph sketch has been carefully enough reproduced.

‘But there is more than that. The publishers make every effort to have this uncorrected edition quoted by the *Accademia della Crusca* as the edition. Not satisfied with declaring Savonarola a saint, they want to make him a great poet. They say they find something of Petrarch in him, and they publish his own poetry in a form which sometimes is really barbarous. *Et surtout pas de zèle* : these words I constantly remembered in reading the preface of the publishers, where you see the most gigantic efforts of the two admirers and worshippers of the friar coming to nothing at all.

‘Yours very truly,

‘PASQUALE VILLARI.’

THE END.

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